THE

COMMONWEALTH RECONSTRUCTED.

BY

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PREFACE.

MANY readers, I am well aware, will claim that the account of the present state of our politics that is contained in the following pages is partial and overdrawn. I shall admit the justice of the criticism, but only in the sense that the redeeming features of the situation are not equally presented with the condemnatory. But to do that did not belong to the purpose that I had in view in that description, which was to show that the condition of our political affairs is too shameful and calamitous to be willingly submitted to by an intelligent and virtuous people. In doing this no exaggeration has been practiced; and none was necessary.

The justice of my representation will be the more readily disputed because there seems, just now, to be a lull in the storm of our political afflictions, which sanguine and superficial observers readily take for a lasting change in the weather. But, while I am ready to believe that the public business is more honestly conducted to-day in the majority of our capitols and city halls than it was in 1870, I can see no ground for expecting that the amelioration will be permanent. Particular enormities may never be repeated, but the species is the native and inevitable product of our present political system, and will multiply in number and variety till the defects of that system are corrected. Moreover, no improvement whatever appears in the competency of the men who are put in charge of the public interests.

Nevertheless, the topic in the ensuing discussion where I have most failed to satisfy myself is this very matter of setting forth the existing state of public affairs. The sketch is not only scanty, but broken, unskilful and most incomplete. But I console myself with the reflection that, as no painter was ever yet able to spread upon the canvas the common brute landscape in all its variety of motion, form and color, so must literary art forever fail perfectly to portray the complex, ever changing and innumerable phenomena of political society. I comfort myself also with this; that intelligent readers will easily be able, by recollection and the conclusions of reasonable analogy, to fill out the picture.

OSWEGO, N. Y., *August* 28, 1877.

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THE

COMMONWEALTH RECONSTRUCTED.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

POLITICAL institutions are not the first necessity of mankind, nor the chief. Personal wants are earlier and more pressing than any that belong to the neighborhood. Compared with clothing, food and fire, roads, laws and punishments are an after thought, and a convenience merely. So the sexual and family instincts, which draw after them so many activities, long antedate the thought of politics. But, while thus a secondary matter to the individual, civil government is the very cradle and anchorage of society, and alone makes possible the concord and coöperation that are essential to the progress of the species. Its importance increases with time. Of few and narrow offices at first, it has constantly augmented their number and scope, encroaching more and more upon individual autonomy, and more and more affecting the general welfare. When its operations extend, as they do now in this country, from the repair of a neighborhood highway to the building of a railroad across the continent, and from the education of childhood to the bloody conscription of war, its influence on human happiness outstrips hyperbole.

Compared with the philosophy of politics, therefore, all other philosophies—the analysis of mind or the classification of matter, the problems of religion or of morals, the weighing of atoms or of planets, chemistry, mechanics, æsthetics, history, or whatever other inquiry has ever occupied the attention of men—is of but mean account. To study on these while that remains unsettled, is to be busied with the ornamentation of a home whose very foundations are still insecure.

Throughout history this august arena has been the perpetual scene of strife, uncertainty and disaster,

> "Where eldest night and chaos hold eternal war,
> And by confusion stand."

The mutual slaughter of conflicting interests; the devastations of pride, resentment, jealousy and ambition, among individuals and nations; reason and humanity constantly violated; fraud crowned with success and incompetency with advancement, have given to the story of political society a prevailing sombre hue. Bright spots are now and then, and here and there, apparent, but nowhere can be seen the wide and long continued prevalence of concord, prosperity and truth.

Also have spontaneous growth and peaceful change in systems of government been almost unknown. Not the painless metamorphosis of healthy development, but rather the cruel surgery of vivisection is the customary spectacle in this theatre —or even self-mutilation, as though nature, insane or insensitive, warred with herself.

The evils that are generally laid to the conduct of politics, it is to be remembered, are by no means all that belong there. Many of them reach us so indirectly that their true origin is undetected, while many others are so widely prevalent as to be easily taken for a part of the scheme of nature, and therefore inevitable.

With the progress of time the turmoil of political society rather increases than abates, as keeping pace with the growing extent, numerousness and complexity of social relations. Each integration begets new differences, and every contest broods of contests. There is no movement of populations, or lagging of race behind race; no forward step of knowledge or conquest of art, nor even any fresh effort of religion or philanthropy, that does not awaken new contentions, and call for a fresh adjustment of powers or rights, between nations, neighborhoods, sentiments, interests and callings.

Such is the disorder of the scene that what is spoken of as the Philosophy of History is little more than the history of the philosopher's own mind. The science of political society, by the confession of its most renowned expounder, Mr. Herbert Spencer, has still little other basis than heaps of statistics, which, like clay in the hands of the potter, can take any form and illustrate any conceit. Thus far, it must be admitted, the boiling ocean is the truest type of politics to human understanding. That this surge is lifted by the last it is easy to see, but the general array is an incomprehensible tumult. If there be, deep down, some tendency "to law, system and order"—as the Gulf-stream beneath its storm-tossed surface still bears with steady current toward the polar star—its latitude and direction are as yet undescribed.

Of this also can governments be justly accused: that, considering their mighty powers, they have done little toward the advancement of society. Not the general welfare, but its own security and promotion, has been the chief aspiration and employ of political power. Seldom has it done more for civilization than to occupy what private undertaking had conquered. Neither equality of rights, enlarged liberty, humaner laws, material prosperity, nor any other of the many benefits that now surround us, was conceived in the nest of authority, or took first wing from its exalted verge. Their sperm has come from private loins, they have been nourished up by private assiduity, and launched by private daring. Not Parliament, but Wilberforce, Clarkson and Zacharay Macauly, made freedom universal throughout the British Empire. Not the State, but Dewitt Clinton, was the father of our canals.

Moreover, the student of history is forced to doubt whether the art of government is really making much progress. In all that concerns political construction and administration the devices of the present age are little more than scholia on the methods of antiquity. Hardly will any modern state dare to boast over Rome, whether as regards its home system or its colonial, its *Senatus Populusque* of authority, its military roster or its civil code, its adjustment of duties or of rights, its machinery of movement, or its buttresses of security. Certainly, there is nothing now going that either so fully accords with the spirit of the age, or so effectually endows society with power, as the constitutions of the states that twenty centuries ago rose and fell along the coasts of the Mediterranean.

Take the matter of municipal business, in which political skill has as fair a scope and as complete an exhibition as anywhere: it would be hardihood to deny that Rome or Carthage was better watered, drained and paved, considering the mechanical attainments of its era, than any modern metropolis; or that in the free cities of Italy and Germany, three centuries ago, the common welfare was as well watched over as it is today in Manchester, Lyons, Berlin, New Orleans or Brooklyn.

What progress in politics have the republics to the south of us made since their beginning? or what we ourselves? Or what has been gained in Europe to the cause of peace—prime object of social endeavor—since Sully's time? If, in this Christian day, a temple stood to Janus for the region over which Rome ruled, it would be as seldom shut as it was under her pagan gods. More civilized blood has been spilt in senseless war within these last two decades than in any other equal period of recorded history.

At the very best, political society, in the language of sailors, is still in the doldrums, becalmed or baffled. If there be any forward movement, it is so slow that to await its work is like watching while autumnal rains wash down the mountains to the plains. At the rate we go it will surely take far more than the two hundred years of Carlyle's prediction to put society in good order.

In one particular the art of politics seems absolutely to retrograde. More now than in the time of Lucullus or Oxenstiern must the bystander be shocked, at least in this country, by the spectacle of small men in great station.

A forcible inculpation of all existing systems of government is to be found, also, in the difficulty and delay that improvements in political business constantly meet with in spreading from one community to another. Every well informed man can point out cases in plenty where one public matter is better managed here, and another there; but the attempt to transport a political amelioration from one community to another meets obstacles almost as great as what separated Dives from Lazarus. If the very elixir of political life were somewhere found out, and its recipe published, it would be an eternity, as things have gone, before surrounding nations would arrive to drink the inspiring draught. In other fields of human skill no worthy invention lacks quick recognition and employment on every side. Thus politics remains a medley, while the chief principles and practices of chemistry, engineering, and all the like, are uniform throughout the world.

It is further to be noticed, that, throughout history, the several forms of government have been perpetually interchanging, without much other law of precedence than chance, or ground of favor than success. There is hardly a country or a people that has not tried them all, and, often, over and over again. Within a century France has been thrice a republic and four times a monarchy, tinctured each time, in always different degrees, with aristocracy and hierarchy. This very generation has seen a majority of the thrones of Europe cast down, and set up again, as it were between two days. Even in the most advanced communities the several native forces of politics appear to be playing at leap frog. To-day the spirit of reform mounts over the rest, to-morrow conservatism, next day capital, and the day after brute numbers, or high striding personality. In every department of politics cast-off styles come back to be used again, about as frequently as the fashions that women wear.

Whether one form of government be better than the rest history still leaves in doubt. Each of them has its benefactions to boast of, but each is also shamed by the record of too many mean, weak and wicked deeds, to warrant a lordly air. The best argument for any one of them is the shortcomings of the rest. If the past have any instruction, they must all somewhere be greatly lacking. France, which has some claim to be called the focus of modern political life, has tried them all repeatedly within a century; has found in all equal insecurity and disaster; and hangs to-day on the verge of some unknown abyss. Surely a machine that should work so ill, and fly so often into pieces as political contrivances have, would be condemned by every good mechanic.

This testimony of facts to the incompetency of all existing forms of political construction is but what reason would expect. Not here will I discuss democracy, either in its principles or its customary methods; but, surely, its ancient and only logical opponent, the hereditary rule of monarchs or oligarchs, is a thing that nature and common sense revolt at. No more can be said, as Franklin remarked, in favor of hereditary princes, than in favor of hereditary professors of mathematics. The idea is, at best, but the "go farther and fare worse" suggestion of expediency. That the many should be the heirlooms of the few were not so incongruous in Homer's time, or in Japan; but for the liberty-loving German race, whose portrait in the pages of Cæsar and Tacitus promised so much, and which has so long enjoyed the benefits of Christianity and the printing press, nothing could be more disappointing.

It has been imagined that in some such distribution of authority among kings, lords and commons as the constitution of Great Britain presents, is to be found the natural adjustment of political society. But many congener populations on the Continent have tried a like arrangement with very poor results. It is not to this, nor to her copious mines, her fertile soil, her steady clime, or her supposed superior stock, that England owes her long prosperity, but to the fortification of the sea. Had she been joined to the Continent, and stood elbow to jostling elbow amid its various tribes and states, her politics would be as uncertain and unsuccessful to-day as that of the most forlorn community in Europe. It is only this isolation that has saved her industry, wealth and freedom from the repeated disastrous trampling that France and Germany have so often suffered from foreign powers.

Certainly the British constitution can lay small claim to be considered a system of government that much accords with reason or nature. It is full of solecisms against both. Its figment of royalty, its vestige of hierarchy, its House of Lords, seated half by heirship and half by promotion, and its monstrous inequalities of democracy, form an inconsistent and incoherent farrago at which philosophy can but smile, and which nature refuses to father. To the eye of skill it looks like an ill-sorted museum, where all about antique fragments are set side by side with the newest inventions. To see how lacking it is of correspondence with universal principles, it is only necessary to consider how utterly impossible it would be to set it up in Canada, Australia, Mexico, France, or this country! Whom should we make king, or duke, or lord bishop? However good that system of political authority may be for the British, no other people are likely ever to enjoy it. It is in fact but the mixed result of a long series of casualties and makeshifts, the like of which can by no chance anywhere occur again.

Always political society has seemed to bear within itself the seeds of its own decay. Humanitarianism, its present liveliest inspiration, threatens the degradation of the whole race, by aiding the weak, the wicked, and the diseased to propagate their kind with a refreshed fecundity.

On the whole, it is difficult to see what guaranty there anywhere is against a continuance of the periodic disastrous revolutions that have heretofore characterized the career of nations. It is by no means clear that printing, railroads, telegraphs, and the many other material inventions that have of late so greatly advanced individual welfare, have much conduced to the good behavior of government. Certainly the railroad has not, in this country; and it is doubtful whether the newspaper has. All such things are the weapons of the worse, as well as of the better elements of society; and perhaps but tend, like the musket in warfare, to bring base qualities nearer to a level with high.

Germany is confident in herself to-day, but, if Barbarossa has indeed returned, may he not go back? Who will guarantee a decade of tranquillity to any nation on the Continent of Europe? Great Britain has long been studiously employed in rebuilding and replanting: but will her new towers stand faster than her old? or will her planted orchards of larch and chestnut outlive her native oaks? What will her new-born grimy democracy spare, in that near day when her various mines, with all the occupations that depend on them, shall begin to fail? or her industry outgrow her commerce? I know not what warrants our own belief in the permanence of this republic. To-day seems sunshiny; but there was a bad storm yesterday; and there may be a worse to-morrow. Surely he who lately looked so struck with death that they who stood around exclaimed with one accord: "Lo! now he breathes his last," can make but doubtful claim to immortality. A hundred years is no great longevity for a nation.

It is this troubled aspect and clouded outlook of political society that chill the hearts of old observers like Hugo and

Carlyle, and turn into apathy or moroseness the cheerful earnestness of youth in humanity's cause. It was this that silenced the eloquence of Kossuth, and made Garibaldi hide so long in Caprera, wrapped in his faded flag. It is this that makes many weaker minds demand the abolishment of all existing political institutions, as the only road to general justice and content. Indeed there have been times in the present age, and in the most enlightened countries, when, to every man of feeling, it has seemed far better to seek the solitude of the wilderness than to take part in the bloody sustentation of political institutions, or, watching aloof the cruel struggle, to bear the pangs of wounded sympathy.

Viewed the high importance of civil government, the medley and unsatisfactoriness of its past career, its present slow amelioration, if there be any, and its dubious future; and remembered, also, the wide intellectual activity of the present age, it looks a little strange that, hardly since Aristotle, has the fundamental inquiry of political science been less prosecuted than it is at present. We have plenty of disquisition on the past, criticism of the present, and prophecy about the future; and no end of petty patching of laws, charters and constitutions; but the prime question of *how to organize the body politic* seems to be pretty much dismissed. It was more studied in the free states and cities of Italy three hundred years ago than it is now in all Europe. I recall at this moment but two or three suggestions towards its solution by contemporaries of note; and these all from the fertile soil of French political invention. Comtè proposed a sort of political hierarchy—and, as some critic remarked, would have been burnt at the stake by his own priests. Taine would divide society into layers, whose political power should vary according to interest and desert; but how to distinguish these castes, he does not explain. The soldier-president McMahon says (July, 1873,) that "when empires and republics become synonymous with discipline, every citizen a soldier and every soldier the servant of the republic, wrangling and strife will cease in this country."

The general desertion of this high field of inquiry by thinking men proceeds somewhat from the idea that the theory of the subject has been already exhausted, and that only lengthened experience can bring improvements in practice: but it principally proceeds from the conviction (1) that argument can be of but little avail against the forces of ignorance, passion, prejudice, habit, casualty, violence and fraud that now have possession of the domain of politics; and (2) that individual assault upon the works of society, garrisoned by society, must be forever futile. Nor should these discouraging views be hastily blamed: for if philosophy, armed with eloquence and devotion, and consecrated by martyrdom, could avail to force the ancient strongholds of maladjustment and wrong doing in public affairs, humanity, it might well seem, would not still so often be clad in weeds, nor social progress find such long delay.

But the real difficulty of introducing any deep political reform into a modern free community proceeds not so much from these opposing influences, nor even from the incompetence, indifference and inertia of the people, as from the hitherto unsolved problem of how to unite, in any large community, the many disconnected elements of native social influence in a concerted effort. But for this defect, the art of government might be as prosperous as mechanics, chemistry or any other of the various sorts of business that now infinitely surpass it in the rate of progress. In the latter case individual intelligence and energy suffice, but, in the other, wide consent and combined movement are required. Every pump-maker can avail himself of Torricelli's vacuum; but not of Adam Smith's political economy.

This is the grand reason why neither general effort nor intention has ever had much to do with shaping political institutions. Says Cicero: "As children employ their limbs without learning how to use them, so political society has taken its various forms without much calculation of its own." The casualty of intestine broils, conquest, colonization, or the like, has made one country a monarchy, another an oligarchy, and another a republic. Our own boasted federal system was but the birth of an accidental congeries of small communities, each autonomic, but each needing the others' support. It is this predominance of chance that still makes the civil geography of Europe as changeable as the skies. Political society, even among the supreme Caucasian race, yet but imitates the blind elemental warfare which of old prepared its geologic seat. To boil and subside, to be shifted by nether shock and ground by upper violence, to be worn by floods, and suffer alternate heats and frosts, still mirrors its career.

Can this sorry state of things be helped by human endeavor? The doctrines that are now in vogue seem to say not. Says Mr. Herbert Spencer, speaking of the constructions and behavior of political society: "Those forces alone are efficient which have grown out of national character." "The growth of a governmental organization follows from the nature of the men who have associated themselves together to satisfy their needs." Again: "This belief in the innate virtue of constitutions is as baseless as was the belief in the natural superiority of royal personages;" and again: "Forms of government are of value only so far as national character gives life to them, and are essential only as agencies through which that national character may work out its effects." His American commentator and apostle, Mr. Youmans, in the June, 1873, number of the Popular Science Monthly, adds the logical corollary, that "character is certain to work out its effects, and whenever governmental forms cease to be suitable agencies of national character in the working out of the national destiny, the former give way, the latter alone persists."

This is but a dreary echo of Epicurus; and would both unnerve personal effort and mummify public spirit: for surely it is little that the individual, or the generation can hope to do toward changing slow-grown national character. Logically carried out, this philosophy would lead the taxpayer of New York or New Orleans to sit idly by while the "natural development" of politics makes him a pauper. But history discredits, and reason repudiates the doctrine. Mr. Spencer in fact misapplies his own instruction. After having rightly made inheritance, environment and integration the three great elements of the social state, he seems, in the above passage, to forget that the last is by no means the mere passive product of the others, but their equal partner, also, in active force. It can deflect the stream of long inheritance; and, like each separate particle of matter in gravity, reacts on equal terms upon all that surround it. As the skill and muscle of the mariner enable him to cross the current that he floats on, so can individual power wrestle not in vain against the very tides of time. Frames of government are just as much matters of development as spinning frames are, and no more. Granted that Watt was the product of inheritance and the environment, the steam-engine was the product of Watt; and it certainly has had no small influence in shaping the destiny of the nation that he belonged to. Man is the chief circumstance in the environment of man. For each passing generation it is personality—that near-by and short-lived *tertium quid* which telescopic philosophy is apt to overlook—that is chief arbiter of political affairs.

Unless, therefore, the question of the right construction of civil government be that fateful riddle which each generation in turn must undertake and fail at, suffering condignly for the failure, we need not regard the situation as hopeless. As in geology a new access of heat gathers new veins of silver or gold, so may fresh study avail to bring into profitable assemblage elements of political truth that have heretofore lain scattered, and therefore useless. I know not why the skill that in these keen-sighted days has found out the chemistry of the stars, sucked from the deep strata of the earth her profitable juices, and even analyzed the human conscience till the machinery of a clock is hardly easier to understand, may not yet avail to contrive something better in the construction of civil society than has yet been anywhere employed.

Let us examine this subject as it is presented to the American people.

CHAPTER II.

OUR DEMOCRACY A PARTIAL FAILURE.

SECTION I.

PRESENT BEHAVIOR OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM.

NOT many will deny that the present state of public affairs in this country gives cause for great dissatisfaction and anxiety. Only the successful politician, the fanatic partisan or the patriot fool is contented with it. The pæans to "Columbia! child of the skies," that Dwight and Freneau sung, and Paine and Jefferson echoed, have turned to apologies in the mouths of Centennial orators, or even to reproaches. Neither government at Washington, nor at any State-house or city hall, is held in much respect. Democracy has begun to incur its own contempt. All the anchors by which the faith of the founders of our institutions held—whether written constitutions, frequent elections, or the general distribution of land—are loosening from the ground; while, under the lee, threaten the rocky shores where lie strown the wrecks of all earlier republics. No means of security anywhere appear. Accounting has become a trick, responsibility a sham, investigation a farce, and punishment a myth. We separated from the mother country on account of "taxation without representation," but we have found that, the more general the representation, the heavier is the taxation. Not a few of the intelligent among us, witnessing the good behavior and good fortunes of all her present dependencies, almost regret that we ever forsook her guiding hand.

Our repute abroad is perishing. The glory that still clings about the American name is not due to the present behavior of our politics, but to its former purity and intelligence, the general character of the people, and the triumphs of individual genius. We are becoming a warning, instead of an example; and the schools of tyranny and prescription use our story for a text-book of admonition.

Only a brief reference to some of the more conspicuous features of this miscarriage of American democracy, with an occasional illustration from facts, will be here made: an indictment that should embrace them all would fill volumes.

The first thing that the observer will notice is the division of the great body of the people into two

Conflicting Parties,

which, with seldom much basis in national, have none whatever in local policy; but which, nevertheless, determine them both, wresting from uprightness every public function. Not personal fitness, nor any matter of policy chiefly decides which candidate shall be President, Congressman, Governor or Alderman, but what party he belongs to. So seated is this artifice, or fiction, that it is now not only constantly recognized in various ways by legislation, but is even taken account of in organic law—as in the latest constitutions of Ohio and Pennsylvania.

A custom of frequent

Rotation in Office

everywhere prevails, whereby the experience and tried qualities that in all private business are counted of the greatest value, are lost to public use. From this come bad management of the commonwealth, and great stimulation of office-seeking.

The selection of all our public servants has virtually passed into the hands of

Organizations of Politicians,

who leave nothing for the people to do but to endorse their nominations—and indeed, by false election returns, not seldom counterfeit that endorsement.

Politics having thus become a business, business has in turn become a politician. Hence

The Lobby,

which crowds the approaches of every capitol and city hall with the attorneys of private interests, coöperative with each other, and ready to buy all that are for sale.

That all our public men are corrupt is the opinion only of corruption itself; but that a very large portion of them are, recent exposures have abundantly demonstrated. It is hardly too much to say that

Venality has become the Higher Law of Public Life.

This is conceded by general opinion. "Laws" says Hon. Sam. J. Bayard, "have become a purchasable commodity;" and so, he might have added, has their execution. When public bodies are incorrupt, it is most often because their virtue has had no great temptation. Though rankest where the soil is richest, corruption has lately sprouted even in the lean pastures of Vermont and Nebraska. Fondest of big contracts, liberal commissions and fat domains, it does not disdain to feed upon the scanty revenues of poor-houses and hospitals. From the gift-taking master of the White House to the janitor of the Tombs who deals out the courtesies of the gallows for a consideration, everywhere shines out the greedy eye, and is stretched forth the expectant palm. Take the case of the Credit Mobilier: that single transaction would have doubly decimated the forty-second Congress, and twice emptied the chair of the Vice-Presidency itself, had the matter been tried by the scrutiny of skill and with the severity of ancient honor, instead of before a dull and easy, if not sympathizing tribunal. So, the recent partial exposures of the Indian Rings, the Post-office Rings, the Whisky Rings, and scores of others the like, are absolute proof of wide prevailing corruption in all departments of the federal service.

It is no better in the several States. Railroad legislation, even in the most virtuous of them, has reeked with rottenness. Witness the history of Hartford and Erie in Massachusetts, and of the Vermont Central in Vermont. Very seldom, notoriously, is any public edifice built without participation by the authorities in charge in the unlawful profits of its erection; or any prison, asylum or reformatory carried on without similar malfeasance. The canals pay tolls to the collector of tolls; banking and insurance are blackmailed by their official superintendents, and school-book monopolists divide with school boards their exorbitant exactions.

The case of municipalities is still worse. Here, surely, local government for local purposes has broken down. There is no civic virtue that is not thwarted in the city. The great expenditures for streets, roads, parks, water, lighting, the public peace, and the public health which these centres of population, business and wealth are obliged to make, gather about them a flight of harpies beyond the common. The familiar story of New York is the story of them all. Jobbery and fraud pervade her business. What of her roll of officers is not made up of corruptionists is pretty much filled out with sinecurists. Her commerce is vexed by extortionate, and, often, unlawful fees. Her chief highways lie foul and dilapidated, while far out in the suburbs an army of surveyors, assessors, and favored contractors busily confiscate the property that they pretend to benefit. Her architecture, harassed by official craft and greed, but unbenefited by official skill, awaits its turn of casual conflagration. Her public schools are the prey of stealing tradesmen and educational quacks. Her charities support the idle and the dissolute. The guardians of her health are themselves rotten. Her police lie in wait for the innocent, and shield the guilty. She has no punishments that influence will not soften, and no prison that a golden key will not unlock.

Even our judiciary has got a taint. The oppressions of a heathen age have returned to vex the weak and the friendless. In the lower courts illegal fees are exacted by justices and recorders, fines appropriated, favor shown to politicians and their friends, and judgment delayed, or bent in aid of wrong and in obstruction of right. In many parts of the South and frontier West judges are chosen, it is credibly stated, for the very purpose of shielding the friends and punishing the enemies of the politicians that nominate them. It is notorious that in the federal District Courts, as well in New York and Vermont as in Arkansas and North Carolina, innumerable prosecutions have been instituted for the mere purpose of bringing emolument to commissioners, marshals and prosecuting attorneys. The referee courts and judicial receiverships of the State of New York are but a field where lawyers league together to rob clients. Not many years ago our county judges conspired to procure from the legislature by personal and party pressure an increase of pay that was demanded neither by right nor public opinion. In a single year, 1872, four members of the Supreme Court of the State of New York were impeached and condemned, or escaped such ignominy by resignation or death. The Federal judiciary was thinned about the same time by the forced retirement of three district judges. There are many who believe that its highest rank has been twice packed within the last ten years; once in the interest of a party, and once in the interest of Wall Street.

A recent passage in the history of the New York and Erie Railroad furnishes a comprehensive example of our political debauchery. I refer to the culminating disaster of that great property, when a Foreign Minister of the Republic, in the hire of foreign capitalists, got the aid of the State legislature and judiciary, and of the police authority of the city of New York, and even the promise of countenance and help, if they should be needed, from the President himself, gained by force and intrigue the control of the road, and divided the profits of the conspiracy among the conspirators.

But we suffer even more from

The Incompetency of Public Men

than from their dishonesty. The to-and-fro policy of Congress about the tariff has cost the country more than a thousand Credits Mobiliers would; and the folly of an alderman is more destructive to our welfare even than his greed.

The business of making laws is by far the most difficult, as well as the most important of public functions; and yet we constantly see it committed to men who are grossly ignorant alike of all the settled principles of governmental policy, of the history and present condition of the law, of the real needs of their constituents, and of the state and methods of the public business. No spectacle is more painful for intelligent patriotism to contemplate than the narrowness and crudity of ideas, the confusion of methods, and the futility of measures, that characterize average American legislatures. Constantly they present the sorry sight of men talking who have nothing to say, and voting about what they do not comprehend. They start for they know not what, over an unknown road, stumbling about in the dark, and wheeling us from slough into slough. Their proceedings exhibit neither decorum, method nor industry. The greater part of every session they loiter away, or occupy in unworthy personal and party squabbles; while, near the end, they hurry along their botched work like belated apprentices, and leave it half unfinished at the last. Governor Tilden, of New York, found it necessary to vetō one hundred and thirty-seven bills in one session, on account of absurdities, contradictions, superfluity, incompleteness or unconstitutionality. His successor, Governor Robinson, has been kept even busier in the discharge of the same task. These bodies exhibit the natural fecundity of low organisms. Every new legislator comes to his work bursting with as many projects of law as a pismire eggs. Said Governor Seymour in his annual message of 1872; "Our legislature now passes more than a thousand bills each session, filling two volumes of a thousand pages each." How many more are introduced and considered he does not state. Says Governor Robinson in a communication to the legislature May 18, 1877: "Within twenty years above two thousand three hundred laws relating to the city of New York, of which nearly six hundred make or modify governmental powers, have been precipitated upon the statute books. Laws heaped upon laws, original, repealing, amendatory and re-enacting, make a mingled heap from which lawyers shrink confounded and judges turn at fault. Our highest court has held one branch of New York city law utterly beyond interpretation or construction." It is the like in other States and at Washington. The British Parliament, though it unites the powers and functions of Congress and of all our separate State legislatures and constitutional conventions, and manages a half a hundred colonies and a fourth part of the population of the earth, does not pass as many laws annually as the State of New Jersey. This profusion has increased many fold since this generation began, and still grows. An Albany correspondent of the New York Tribune is boasting to-day (May 8, 1877) that the present legislature has already exceeded the whole work of the last by thirty enactments and is not yet near through its work!

It is through the incapacity of our law-makers that our legislation, state, national and municipal, is now but a heap of confusion, most unlike the work of intelligent art. Study cannot master it, nor ingenuity reconcile its inconsistencies. Hence the multiplicity, protraction, cost and disappointments of litigation. "Forty years ago," said a judge of the Supreme Court at a recent meeting of the District bar in Syracuse, "we knew what law was, but now we do not." But for what still remains of the old Common Law to guide our courts, our situation, for any security of rights or certainty of obligations, would be pitiful indeed. The contents of our statute books are becoming as incapable of codification as the rubbish of the streets of being turned to crystal; and, if they could be brought into some order, the next legislature, by the impact of a thousand new statutes, would fetch confusion back. Thus this very year (1877), a part of the Code which the New York legislature had appointed a commission to prepare about twenty years ago being offered for approval, the law committee of the Senate forthwith proposed two hundred and seventy-five amendments to it; and its adoption had to be postponed.

If we might regard the work of each successive legislature as a fresh investment of the public will, the habiliments of American democracy would resemble nothing so much as the beggarly suits with which, one over another, some prosperous tramp endues himself, each displaying as many rents and grease spots as it hides.

Taxation is nigh Unbearable.

More and more true grows the saying of Necker, that "the fisc is the state." Barbarism pays for government with blood, civilization with money. It is recorded that the men of Lorraine joined in the Revolution of 1789 because the king and the seigniors exacted from them a twentieth part of the products of the land. Would that democracy would let us off as easy! In the city where I live productive real estate is taxed near to the amount of its rental value, and in many instances beyond it. There are few cities in the land where at least a fourth part of the income from real estate is not gathered into the public treasury. In rural regions the case is somewhat better. To these direct taxes is to be added the large indirect levy upon our living that the federal government makes in customs and excise.

But even this enormous cost of government does not always enable us to pay as we go. There are few of our municipalities that do not add to their debts every year, issuing new bonds, not only for extraordinary undertakings, but to meet current expenses. The indebtedness of the cities in the State of New York was tripled between 1866 and 1876. As things are going it seems impossible in many of them, for the property owners long to escape the utter confiscation of their possessions, unless they resort to repudiation, or mob the sheriff. It has been demonstrated by Mr. Harris of Springfield, Massachusetts, that the average net saving of each citizen is less than ten dollars per annum; but direct taxes in our cities amount to double that. Not long can any people stand this. It is not strange that so many communities in the South and West are refusing to pay their debts.

Apart from what is raised to meet public debts—of which the great bulk has no honest parentage—not one half of this enormous levy would be required under a capable and honest conduct of the public business. Experts tell us that Vanderbilt's or Stewart's book-keepers and book-keeping would keep the records of the federal treasury at less than a quarter of the present expense. Were our navy conducted with the skill and economy that characterized the management of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, it would make a far more creditable display than it has lately made, and at vastly less than its present cost. There is no city in the land but what if it could put its best men in control of its affairs would save more than half its present outlays.

Little, alas! can the mass of the people understand the ways and the particulars in which they are cheated. No gentle heiress under a corrupt and cunning guardian is more ignorant how her estate is despoiled than is democracy in this country of the robberies that it suffers at the hands of its ministers. Sometimes we get a narrow glimpse of certain wrongs that for a moment crop to light—as when we see a navy rot; a harbor built, in the interest of local politicians, that commerce does not need; public buildings erected at three-fold the proper cost; a defaulter caught with his pockets full; or a canal, or whiskey ring, grown over-brazen by long success, exposed; but the pervading misconduct of affairs is, to the common mind, but a field of surmise. Public officers seem purposely to mystify the public business and the public accounts. Thus the clerks of the federal exchequer—secretary, treasurer, collector, register and auditor—render balance-sheets that no man finds it possible to reconcile. Thus no member of a municipality, anywhere, can find out how his city stands financially: and thus it happened—for striking illustration of this statement—that, a few years ago, a Committee of the best citizens of New York gave Tweed, Sweeney, Conolly, Hall and the rest, in the height of their fraudulent career, a certificate of integrity.

SECTION II.

OUR POLITICAL CONDITION IS DETERIORATING.

This conclusion is hard for patriotism to come to. Like a man in consumption, who still feels the principle of life stir within his breast, we refuse to acknowledge our own decay. But the fact, nevertheless, is indisputable.

Thirty years ago the organizations of politicians that have now taken charge of the people's business were but in embryo. Office-seeking, such as we see it now, and the constant wanton change of public officers, were both utterly unknown in our early history. Not till lately has official power been publicly used to control elections; nor the press been systematically subsidized out of public treasuries; nor the lobby moved from the attitude of the open petitioner to authority to become the secret go-between of private greed and official venality, and yet to stand cheek by jowl with senators and judges.

Party has Changed for the Worse.

The spirit of party, to be sure, was undoubtedly more intense in the early part of our history than it is of late, and more often embittered personal relations. But that was because there was then more conscience and more conviction in politics. So long as the young republic was believed by some to be still in peril from foreign hostility, and, by others, from foreign friendship; while the strength and fitness of its construction were not yet fully proved; and while the most vital questions of domestic policy and administration were still in dispute, party spirit was a form of patriotism, and it was natural and reasonable that a difference in politics should make enemies of neighbors. But there are no such grounds of honest party quarrel now. The machinery of politicians has taken the place of popular zeal—the discipline of a hired army of the spirit of a patriotic militia—in the conduct of our affairs. Surely this is a change for the worse.

The early Annals of the Republic furnish Few Instances of Official Crime.

Defalcation was so unknown, even in the last generation, that when Swartwout, a collector of customs at New York, ran away with the public funds, he christened the new malfeasence with his own name. Said Governor Tilden: "Eight and twenty years ago I have stood in the legislative halls of the State, and no member elected to an office in the gift of the people would have been suspected of dishonesty or peculation." But now, as said Isaiah of apostate Jerusalem, "every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards." The multiplying investigations of Congress and State legislatures, like the lengthening calendar of a criminal court, testify to the growing rifeness of malversations in office. So common have they become that the news of them palls upon the public sense. Only when some Democratic hero or Republican saint, like Tweed or Colfax, is caught red-handed; or when a new volume of fraud is opened, like the District of Columbia Ring, or the Brooklyn Bridge Ring, is our curiosity awakened. Things that twenty-five years ago would have greatly excited the public mind are now put in small type by the appreciative editor, and postponed by the reader to the chronicles of base ball. Once the suspicion of impurity in a public man made him avoided, but now, so weakened or infected is democratic sentiment, the most notorious political rogue stays undisturbed in his club and in his church.

Not till lately has the virtuousness of the judiciary come under suspicion. Not till lately has the pulse of popular favor been felt for from this high station, or the ermine been badged with party mottoes. Since 1870 more judges have been impeached, or resigned to avoid impeachment, than in all our history before. Rottenness now reaches back to the very springs of justice. Said Recorder Hackett of New York city at the opening of the October term of the court of General Sessions (1874): "The Grand Jury has come to be a body quite as much under lobby influence as legislative bodies." Such accusation was never before made from such-high quarters: but it was justified by abundant facts.

The Decay of Skill

among public men even exceeds the decay of integrity. Constantly the management of the commonwealth falls farther and farther behind the requirements of the times. Blundering, make-shift and make-believe are about all that is now going on. Let him who doubts our decline in this regard compare the discussions and the work of the framers of the federal system with the records of recent constitutional conventions in New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Illinois—communities each about equalling the sum of the Colonies in population, and far exceeding them in general enlightenment. Down to about the beginning of this generation our laws, State and Federal, exhibited as much foresight, elevation of purpose, and fitness of methods, as have ever been shown in the highest parliaments of the world. Better things were seldom done by government than were done by the State of New York at the period when it built its canals, secured to every child the opportunity of education, set capital free in its banking system, and labor and enterprise in its abolishment of imprisonment for debt. In those days each annual statute-book marked a step onward, and we were fast proving the inventors of politics for the world. Then our public councils, municipal, state and federal, were filled with men who had arrived at a just leadership in the community by force of character, intelligence and training; but now they are filled mainly by intriguers and demagogues, by the sutlers and drum-majors of party warfare, with little character, less intelligence and no training at all. The sort of men that Massachusetts and Virginia once sent to Congress they seldom send there now. I hazard nothing in asserting that the Federal Senate to-day, in point of ability or elevation of character, is not the equal of the average Senate of the State of New York anterior to the adoption of the constitution of 1846. Still faster and lower, by universal admission, has fallen the character of our city councils.

To spread out a list of personal illustrations in this regard would bring little strength to this position; and, however fairly done, might subject me to the imputation of prejudice or malice. But there are three personages in our history who have alike achieved the highest civil station by virtue of military success; whose character is of common knowledge, and forms a part of the property of the country. Chronology and my future argument invite the comparison of them; for they stand equi-distant in time; and to my mind, are just exponents of the three influences that have controlled our politics in its three chief epochs:—the first, while a few men, high in public respect, virtually appointed our rulers; the second, when the sentiments of the people at large found free voice; and the third, since a set of scheming and corrupt politicians have usurped all the functions of true democracy.

Justly to characterize Washington would exhaust the language of encomium. To say that he was virtuous, patriotic, just, high-minded, and greatly wise, is but to echo the voice of universal fame. Whatever slight detraction his glory suffered from the jealousy or misappreciation of his cotemporaries and companions has never found response in removed opinion. The fragrance of his memory, like royal musk which long perfumes some palace chamber, still sweetens and refreshes the national life, forbidding despair.

Andrew Jackson, the second of the trio, though separated by some interval from that exalted nature, was yet of lofty mold. He was one of nature's true chiefs. His valor shone not less brightly in the council than in the field. His mighty stroke it was that cut us loose from all the heritages of the past, and sent American Democracy forth to seek its fortune. He was indeed both a friend and an admirer of the people. His integrity was never questioned; and though his character and career, in some minor particulars, may not have been without blemish, yet, despite of partisan animosity, no citizen of the country he so vigorously ruled has ever been ashamed of him.

But who shall say that none of us have been ashamed of President Grant?

Taxes increase much faster than population and wealth.

About the beginning of this century Washington wrote to Gouverneur Morris that "taxes are hardly known but in name." We cannot say that now. Thirty years ago the Federal government raised for its ordinary expenses about one dollar per head of the population annually; for the last five years it has raised above four dollars per head. In 1852 the rate of State taxation in New York was one-fourth of a mill on the dollar; twenty-five years later it is about four mills. The rate of taxation in the cities of Massachusetts, excluding Boston, has mounted up from $5.94 per head of population in 1861 to $17.11 in 1875, and their debts from $11,000,000 to $70,500,000. In Philadelphia, between 1858 and 1873 the rate of municipal taxation went from one and a half to six per cent on the assessed value of property; and in Rochester, N. Y., from one dollar and twenty cents a head in 1840 to thirteen dollars and forty-three cents in 1876. Tweed limited the levy on the property of his tributaries to two per cent, but since his time "reformers" have got it up to two and three-quarters. These are no more than average instances, casually taken, of the growing fiscal burdens of the people. It is a mistake to say, as some do, that the cost of government has increased only in proportion with the cost of other things. In fifty years the expenses of the municipality of New York have grown from two dollars and thirty-three cents a head to thirty-two dollars and twenty-one cents, but in that time the average wages of labor and the price of its products, which are a measure of the average cost of living, have little more than doubled. The like is true with regard to the growth in value of the real estate of that city, as compared with the increase of its taxation.

Not till in our time has

The Money-making Spirit

coupled with politics, engendering vices unknown before. I by no means join in the common charge that capital is a chief corrupter of public virtue. Capital is the least aggressive of all the elements of social power. It has small taste for politics, especially in a democracy. Apt to be envied or suspected by the commonalty, and dependent for its security on the general harmony and quiet, it is slow to offend or raise a question. Its instinct is to ask of government only to be let alone. Accordingly it seldom busies itself at the caucus, the convention, the polls or the capitol, except for its own protection. When demagogues, strikers and fanatics conspire against it in these arenas, it cannot be blamed for meeting them there with their own weapons. What I chiefly have reference to is such matters as the known confidences between Wall street speculators and the high officers of the Treasury at Washington; and, especially, a kind of bastard business enterprise, falsely assuming the mien of capital and the garb of public spirit, which, through its creatures, hirelings and dupes, has for many years had great control in all our legislatures and common councils; and, by the procurement of subsidies, contracts and other favorable legislation, has robbed the people of uncounted millions. Somewhat set back at Washington by the collapse of the Northern Pacific Railroad—grand type of the modern combination of politics with money making—and the various calamities and developments that succeeded it, this form of maladministration and public vice, under the programme of paternal policy that the present federal administration has published, threatens to exceed the worst of its past performances. The same powers that have sequestered so large a part of the public lands by procuring railroad subsidies, are already monopolizing the melted snows of the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains; and the day seems to be not far off when every acre on the slopes below will be forced to pay tribute to them for needed irrigation. As things are going it is no way incredible that a syndicate of speculators in sugar or real estate, flattering the ambition or avarice of a low-natured president, mature product of our politics, should yet plunge us into a disgraceful foreign war. Have we not already had warning of such a danger in the case of San Domingo? What but our wasted navy has hindered a greedy administration from seizing upon unfortunate Cuba?

What special calamities await us in this downward career it would be presumptuous to predict. The perils of nations have seldom been foreseen. History has been a series of surprises, each shattering some confidence of theory in race, religion, circumstances, or institutions. Democracy, like a hysterical woman, always has a second convulsion easier than the first. It has suffered one in this country already, and it had a narrow escape from another at the last Presidential election.

I had thought to illustrate and make good the allegations that have been made in this chapter against our political condition by a full chronicle of public misconduct in the State of New York for some short recent period, and had even advanced some way in its preparation; but I soon discovered that to complete the task would occupy years; and, after all, would in effect add little to what the reader may gather from the public prints.

SECTION III.

ARE OUR POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS WORKING AS WELL AS THE BEST?

If this inquiry must be answered in the affirmative we ought perhaps to be satisfied; but if that be at least doubtful, we are bound to try to better our situation.

In estimating the comparative successfulness of our system of government, we must be careful to set one side that part of our welfare which has been due to other than political causes. This nation was born with a gold spoon in its mouth. Its lineage was of the best, and it began its career in that auspicious hour when the growing diffusion of knowledge first gave democracy a reasonable hope of success. The Colonists were fortunate alike in what they escaped from and in what they brought with them. Leaving behind whatever in the political arrangements of the old world was accidental, arbitrary or effete, they fetched and planted here in full maturity the doctrines of liberty and right, and the essential methods of order, that it had cost their ancestors centuries of trial to discover and establish. The vast and vacant material resources of the country, lying within easy reach of the overflowing and adventurous populations across the Atlantic, secured us numbers and wealth. Political equality and liberty, general education, local government for local purposes, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press, were prepared for us in the Colonies, and were the nation's birthright. Finally, we have had no powerful and aggressive neighbors to disturb or threaten the full use of these advantages.

If under such unexampled conjunction of favorable circumstances our political state is not the best in the world, surely we have good reason to be dissatisfied with it. Whether it is that, is very doubtful, to say the least. In my judgment there is not a nation in Europe of congener stock that need fear the comparison. In all of them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are as secure, order as well maintained, justice as evenly administered, and religion and the press substantially as free as they are here. To be sure they lack the absolute political equality that we now enjoy; but let us remember that we have not enjoyed it long, and that it is not yet by any means certain that it is good for us.

As to the comparative ability with which the public business is conducted, the intelligent American will certainly hesitate before he boasts over Great Britain, Belgium or Germany. We lately prided ourselves on a great military success; when straightway appeared an exploit of the German government in the same line, compared with which ours seemed but the triumph of brute numbers. Poor show, surely, as a display of military daring or skill, makes the "March to the Sea" through a region held by women alone, or the long labor of the Army of the Potomac, by the side of the swift campaign that began on the Rhine and ended in Paris, sweeping from its path the armies of a nation unsurpassed in military renown. So, how much better did the government of France, even in its disastered state, meet the financial question that arose, than did our own in its triumphant! Ten months after the conclusion of her war the creditors of France could get gold or its equivalent in payment of their claims, while ten years after the conclusion of ours the Secretary of the Treasury began specie payment by dispensing five dollars on each warrant in a debased silver coinage!

Negro slavery, which long stood an obstacle to the march of the modern spirit of humanity, has now nearly disappeared from the civilized world; but by different means in different countries. In the French possessions it was one of the first sacrifices on the newly erected altar of liberty, fraternity and equality. Great Britain bought it up in her colonies with twenty million pounds of philanthropic money. The Czar crossed it out with a pen. In Brazil it is near extinguishment by measured provision of law. In this country alone it waited to be drowned in a sea of blood.

If we come down to the more ordinary duties of government it will be quite as easy to point out where we fall behind, as where we surpass the best managed countries of the old world.

While the cost of government here is increasing for the last half century at the rate of nigh one hundred per cent every ten years, the taxes of the Englishman are constantly diminishing. Only our countrymen of all the world dodge from city to country, and from State to State, and even expatriate themselves, to escape the inquisitions and exactions of the tax-gatherer. While other countries are abolishing sinecures we are multiplying them. The only economy that we practice is the economy of neglect. According to late official reports it costs to manage the finances of Great Britain one-eighth of one per cent of the money handled, while the same work costs us five-eighths. One per cent of her revenue is spent in the collection, and three per cent of ours. Aristocracies are costly luxuries, but nothing to what Rings of Politicians are. Not many European monarchs can boast a civil list to equal that of Tweed.

Our administration of municipalities, which is now one of the most important parts of governmental business, is conceded to be about the most burdensome and unjust in taxation, the most wasteful in expenditure, the most neglectful of the public welfare, and the most stupid that is known anywhere. It costs Boston and Pittsburgh nearly three times as much, poll for poll, to get themselves governed, as it does Edinburgh and Birmingham; and the indebtedness of New York exceeds the debts of all the cities of England put together. Says Hon. Joseph Medill, of Chicago, a careful and intelligent critic: "The Hausseman improvements in Paris (1869-71) have been carried on with great economy and prudence, and a scrupulous regard to private rights and public convenience." In what city here can this be said of similar undertakings?

I know not in what European state such semi-public interests as insurance, banks of saving, bankruptcy and railroads get so poor legislative direction and watch as they do here. Does any intelligent observer believe that the American Congress could handle the business of the British Parliament, which in variety and complexity many fold exceeds its own, with the almost constant success that has been shown there the past fifty years? Even Canada could teach us something in the management of the Indian tribes.

As to education, which is one of our especial boasts, it is not as general in this country as it is in Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, and it is doubtful whether it is as good. The Centennial Exhibition must have satisfied every intelligent observer that, with regard to the methods and apparatus of instruction, we have at least as much to learn from foreign nations as they have from us. Moreover, the Italian "law Frescati," and the system recently inaugurated by the Portuguese government, are undoubtedly superior to anything that has been done before or elsewhere on this subject.

Not unduly to multiply these comparisons, two features in the conduct of the public business by the Parliament of Great Britain, and more or less of all the best governed political communities on the Continent, favorably distinguish it from the conduct of our own, as well in the State legislatures as in Congress. I mean (1) the initiation of all important measures by a few selected men, constituting a Cabinet; and (2) the frequent commitment for examination and report, and most often in effect for decision, of matters of complexity and detail to commissions of experts. In our legislative bodies everything is everybody's business. Thus Congress will have fifty plans before it for the resumption of specie payments; and a country merchant, become a legislator, will call for the previous question on a bill concerning the police administration of the city of New York.

In one thing, it must be admitted, we have outrun all foreign competitors; I mean the ambitiousness of many of our public works; but whether such undertakings as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Hoosac Tunnel and the New York Capitol will not prove monuments of democratic folly, rather than wisdom, remains to be seen.

We are apt to think ourselves a peculiarly progressive people; and so we are individually; but as to political business it is not so certain. Other nations have made great progress in our time. Within the last ten years Russia has freed her serfs, established trial by jury, a certain freedom of the press, local government for local purposes, and a uniform system of municipal construction. Far greater, it seems to me, has been the improvement in the policy and laws of Great Britain since this century began than in ours. In one important particular at least we are certainly staying behind all the rest of the world; unless the rest is going backward. I mean in the obstruction of commerce, and the diversion of industry from its natural channels, by our navigation laws, and so-called protective tariff of duties. To this it is to all appearance due that the shipping of the high seas has fled our flag, and that normal and symmetric development in the occupations of the people has given place to distortions and monstrosities, with their attendant weaknesses and disasters.

The friends of democracy looked to this republic to set an example of purity to the governments of privilege; but, as it turns out, we threaten to outstrip them all in rottenness. No respectable government of the old world has lately furnished such multitudinous examples of venality as our recent annals exhibit. You must go back in French or English history a full century to find scattered instances of the malfeasance in office that is now of constant occurrence here. The State of New York alone has had more judges in the criminal dock since 1870 than Great Britain in the last two centuries. It is long since a member of the House of Commons or of the imperial cabinet in Great Britain has been degraded or even censured for corruption in office, though at Washington deep-staining dishonor has become of frequent occurrence. As to the comparative purity of municipal authorities, compared with the sort of men that rule in Philadelphia and San Francisco, unless all testimony is to be belied, they are saints in the respectable communities of the old world.

This misbehavior of our system has weakened the hopes of democracy abroad, while Cæsarism takes courage. Says Mr. Edward Jusseu, a very intelligent observer and ardent friend of popular rights, after re-visiting his fatherland: "A few communists are now all the republicans there. Those who were revolutionists in 1848 are now in favor of a strong government, and intensely loyal subjects of the emperor; and the nation is apparently farther from the goal of republicanism than it was then. They look upon all republics, our own included, as miserable failures." Travellers say that there are more monarchists in this country than democrats in Great Britain. Outside of France, republicanism is now the horror of intelligence and property all over Europe; and whether it be not in France itself is doubtful.

CHAPTER III.

CAUSES AND REMEDIES THAT HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED.

THIS sorry state of things has been attributed to a thousand different causes, partial or entire, and as many various remedies for it have been proposed. A few of the principal of them will be here touched upon, to clear the field for a deeper inquiry as to cause and a more radical proposition of cure.

It is to be noticed, preliminarily, that this disappointing condition of our politics cannot be attributed to any change of circumstances, such as has often altered the destiny of nations. We have suffered neither foreign interference nor domestic revolution. The only change in the situation worth mentioning is the enfranchisement of the negro; and the operation of that has been entirely confined to the Southern States. Not to this, certainly, can be charged what is happening in the City or State of New York. Besides, our political decline dates from a period long anterior to the Civil War. Indeed, it was expected by the school of philanthropic reformers who have lately had the lead in social philosophy, at home and abroad, that that event would purify our politics. But, surely, they have grown no better since it happened.

Some lay the Fault to Human Nature,

and contend that nothing better for the future can be expected in politics than the circuit and disorder of the past. Not the cynical alone indulge in this despairing view, but so cheery a man as Franklin taught it toward the end of his life. Said Washington, disappointed in the behavior of his compatriots: "We have thought too well of human nature." Even the faith of Jefferson, than whom the native virtue of mankind had seldom more determined champion, waned toward the last, and he came to look for the success of democracy to the impossible contingency of "keeping people on farms and out of commerce, manufactures and cities."

To my mind, nevertheless, and without philosophizing on the essential nature of man, history furnishes no warrant for this discouragement. Very good government has sometimes been had in the world, for brief periods, and in narrow spaces; and what has heretofore been the exception may yet become the rule. What is to hinder that political advancement should come to correspond with moral and material? Why may not the government of England gain as much on its present state as it has already gained on the Saxon Heptarchy? The real trouble is, not that human nature is unfitted to politics, but that politics have never been fitted to human nature. If any man claims that human nature is essentially vicious, let him explain why in every civilized country the body of laws is in restraint of crime and in support of the general good.

A Good Many Blame the Democratic Principle

for our failure: but illogically; for, as I shall clearly show in the sequel, under the present system of elections we are not, in any of the larger spheres of government, a real democracy, but an oligarchy of politicians merely.

History at large hardly either condemns or justifies the democratic principle; but this instructive fact is clear, that for the last hundred years there has been, on the whole, a growing tendency toward it among civilized nations. Besides, democracy alone has a solid basis in the reason of things. The right of the people to rule is the everlasting right of the strongest. Muscle, Napoleon's "most numerous battalions," is the bottom support of government, and the final arbiter of political contest. The pen is mightier than the sword only when it gives the sword. Peace itself has no secure foundation except the will of the majority of arms-bearing men; and it is the peculiar virtue of popular government to be able to determine on which side of a great public question the majority stands. Moreover, with the more general diffusion of knowledge, the proportional force of mere numbers constantly increases. Thus in barbarous nations, public opinion, lacking means of expression, has little weight in public affairs ; but in enlightened countries, even despotic, it has a good deal.

However all this may be, the question of forms of government is not a practical one for the American people at the present time. If there be something better than democracy in store for us, we shall reach it only at a far distant day, by ways transcending human anticipation and device, and after horrible convulsions. There is no peaceful change in this regard for us. Kings sometimes abjectly flee the throne, but the people never. Those may amicably cast lots for a passive patrimony, but the heritage of democracy is a struggling thing that only the sword, dividing joint and marrow, has ever made a new disposal of. Our hope is not in substituting something else for the rule of the people, but in enabling the people to rule.

Some say that the reason why our system of democracy is not working well is because

The Nation has grown too large for it.

But certainly this does not explain the corruptness of municipal councils, or the incompetence of State legislatures. No possible connection of cause and effect can be traced between the two things. No political community is too big for the handling of genius, any more than the solar system was too big for Kepler or Newton to comprehend.

There are who ascribe the debasement of our politics to

A Decay of the National Character.

They say that when the people were good we had a good government, and that we have a bad one now because we ourselves are in a state of moral decline. They say that we are debauched by prosperity, that we admire only success, and that luxurious sloth and the worship of Mammon have taken the place of patriotic impulse. This doctrine proceeds from mental blearness, cheap cynicism or impudent phariseeism ; or is the sly self-defence of corruption itself. It has no warrant whatever in the current phenomena of private life, or in any demonstrations of general public sentiment. Never was greater patriotism shown than in our late civil war, both North and South. Never have truth and justice been more loved and sought after among the people, self respect more cultivated, or the social and domestic virtues more practiced than they are now. The sordid and discouraged state of our cities is by no means due to lack of public spirit, democratic ambition or social pride. There is enough of these among the denizens of the City of New York, to make its wharves, its streets, its parks, its public edifices, its education, its charities and its corrections, and whatever else belongs to municipal function, marvels of security, convenience and delight. That a corrupting influence has lately been shed abroad from the public service, like infectious air from some central seated lazaretto, is indeed too true; but it has by no means yet availed to poison the moral health of the American people. Every element that political society needs for success abounds in this country, and, despite oppressive and obstructing circumstances, sprouts and blossoms thickly every day—though failing most often of fruit.

Many console themselves with the idea that the present disastrous state of our politics is but the

Afterwash of the late Civil War;

but they ought by this time to be tired of waiting for such disturbance to subside. The fact is that our political decay began long before that epoch, and was rather delayed than accelerated by it. No doubt the circumstances of that great convulsion furnished peculiar opportunities, and unexampled inducement, to fraud and peculation; but they who availed themselves of the one, or yielded to the other, were, with few exceptions, men who had been apprenticed already to the trade of politics. When a million soldiers brought back from the camp no demoralization to domestic, social or industrial life, as, by universal admission, did ours, it is absurd to attribute to the war the general debauchment of politics that we have lately been witnesses of.

Our difficulties can be justly laid

Neither to the Republican nor to the Democratic Party.

All but the purblind and fanatical are ready to confess that there is little to choose between them, or at least between the organizations of politicians that control them. In folly, waste, neglect and corruption, republican rule in our cities has rivalled democratic; nor has a change of party supremacy ever brought much advantage to any State.

Constitutions.

If the distemper of our politics be traceable to no such causes as these, it must be sought for in some defect in our method of *Constituting* Democratic government.

Constitutions—"paper" constitutions as they are called in derision—appear to be in growing disrepute with writers on the philosophy of political society. Says Carlyle: "No constitution, without some celestial sanction, is worth the paper that it is written on." Herbert Spencer makes light of them as "artifices," and Buckle treats them in the same vein. "Constitutional liberty," says Bismarck, "is a delusion."

But every community that is not governed by the momentary will of a despot must have an organic law: that is, *a definite and established method of constituting and distributing political power.* This is the essence of a constitution. Whether it be written or unwritten makes no odds. The ancient custom of the realm is as much a constitution as the parchment enactments of any modern convention; and, whatever its admirers may boast, is as full of imperfections, and as subject to violent and wanton changes.

Current Constitutional Amendments.

That our present political system somewhere hides a great defect is coming to be generally felt. Said Wendell Phillips lately: "The machinery of our government sadly needs overhauling." Said Gov. Seymour, of New York: "In my opinion the present Constitution of the State is very deficient, as a framework of efficient government." From a like conviction New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and I know not how many other States, were all holding Constitutional Conventions in the same year (1873). In the forty-second Congress twenty-five amendments to the Federal Constitution were proposed. There is hardly a city but what goes to the legislature at every session, to get its charter altered. But everything that has yet been done in this direction has proved puerile, or worse. Neither Washington nor any State capital has been purified or enlightened, nor has any city found substantial relief from its grievances. Illinois and Pennsylvania are said to be already sick of the principal devices of their last Constitutional Conventions; and the best intelligence of New York would to-day be glad to go back to the Constitution of 1846, or even to that of 1823. To my mind none of the many various suggestions from distinguished men that have been published promise anything better. Nevertheless, it may be worth while to comment briefly on some of the chief projects of constitutional reform that lately occupy or invite the public attention.

Those which relate to the

Right of Suffrage

are the most radical of them, as touching the very foundation of democratic government. After a steady extension of this privilege for more than half a century, culminating not long since in the admission to it of a million of ignorant and unpracticed negroes, a reaction is threatened. As good a Democrat as Charles O'Conor thinks he sees in the right of all male adults to vote the chief cause of our political difficulties. Congress in its latest legislation for the District of Columbia has rejected " manhood " suffrage; and in many other quarters the subject is matter of earnest consideration.

Three chief conditions of the right to vote have been proposed, viz: (1) Nativity, (2) Education, and (3) the Payment of Taxes.

The first, though the suggestion chiefly of party and religious zeal, had also political prudence on its side; and if it had been put in force at the period when it was agitated, now some twenty years ago, would no doubt have somewhat hindered the decay of our politics: but since the recent decline of immigration, which is no way likely ever to resume its former proportions relatively to the whole population of the country, the value of this remedy is pretty much lost. Besides, having been once rejected at the polls, the limitation of the suffrage to the native born is not likely to appear again as a political issue.

As to Education, it certainly is not because one in twenty of the voters of Philadelphia, or Pennsylvania at large, have not learned to read the Constitution that the other nineteen make such poor use of the power that it confers on them. This test of the fitness of a man to vote has been already tried in several of the States, but has nowhere done any good. Our difficulties have a source far different from lack of book-knowledge.

The third of these conditions is now exciting fresh interest, especially in the State of New York, where a constitutional amendment applying it to municipal elections is under consideration by the legislature and the people. No doubt it is as logical that there should be no representation without taxation as that there should be "no taxation without representation;" but it is uncertain whether this limitation of suffrage can be so applied as not to exclude from the polls as many of the worthy as of the unworthy. It certainly will shut out the great body of intelligent and well brought up young men, very few of whom are the possessors of any property to pay taxes on before the age of thirty, but who are better qualified to vote than the average of owners of real estate. So, in most cities, a larger share of professional, literary and scientific men, teachers and the like, than of almost any other class of citizens would be shut out from the ballot-box by this provision. There is reason to fear, also, that the bulk of taxpayers would be so anxious to keep their taxes down, so ignorant of their remoter interests, and so indifferent to the social obligations that the possession of property carries with it, that the vices of the spendthrift in the administration of our cities would only be exchanged for the vices of the miser. But whatever would be the advantages or disadvantages of such a limitation, there appears to be little likelihood of its being tried at any near day, so that its farther discussion may be spared.

On the whole, though our state would no doubt be greatly benefited by the exclusion from the polls of the vicious, the unintelligent, the uninterested and the unpatriotic, it is difficult to see where and how the law shall draw the line that separates these classes from the rest.

Indeed, at the present time it looks as though the right of suffrage is more likely to be enlarged than narrowed. It is threatened

To call upon the Women to vote;

and whether, in the desperation of our politics, and as a still untried device, this will not actually be done, is quite problematical; though all the instructions of nature, including the very instincts of woman herself, oppose. Certain it is that this outlaw of decent opinion five and twenty years ago is now held in respect by legislatures and constitutional conventions in Massachusetts, New York, Colorado and Michigan, and respectfully treated in party platforms. Escaped from the menagerie of the lecture platform, the wild, foul thing threatens to force itself upon us as a family companion. The sexual difference and subordination that began with the monad, and with the progress of development have grown constantly still more distinct, is now proposed to be disregarded in the domain of politics!

To this astonishing proposition it must suffice to reply, that letting women vote will not help the case unless they are better or wiser than men. Mere increase of numbers will not improve the jury of democracy. Whether they are better is remitted to private judgment, as a question too delicate for this discussion. Whether or not they are wiser, two or three notorious facts should sufficiently indicate. (1) Invention is the highest exploit of the understanding. The kitchen, the nursery and the parlor, which are woman's customary and peculiar realm, contain a thousand pleasing or profitable contrivances, in stove, sewing machine, diaper pin, and window shade, for ornament, convenience or comfort. What one of them was the device of a woman? (2) Nobody has hindered the fair sex from the occupation of literature; but who among them, from Sappho to George Eliot, has got higher in it than the expression of instinct and emotion, or the reflex of a lively receptivity? (3) Science is open to them too, but what have they added to science? (4) Music is their favorite and habitual pursuit, but what woman has ever written an opera, or even a galop?

But, admitted to a nominal share in the regulation of political society, how would the tender sex make it actual? The prime function of government, though one very apt to be overlooked in orderly times, is—not to rule well—but *to rule*. Only physical superiority enables it to do this in the long run. At bottom, it is brute force that not only restrains the violent and punishes the guilty, but holds the orderly citizen to the discharge of his duties. It is not conscience that makes me pay the tax on my house, but the fear of the *posse comitatus* that stands behind the assessor, and will surely turn me into the street unless I pay it. Now, when women come to vote, we shall not fail to have some enactment, such as about the observances of religion, the use of tobacco, the education of children, or the control of the family property, to which the majority of the stronger sex will be strenuously opposed, and will refuse peaceful submission. What will this new authority do then?

Minority Representation, Cumulative Voting, etc.

For some years past public attention has been a good deal directed to "minority representation," "cumulative voting," "multiple voting," and kindred devices, as means of correcting the present misbehavior of democratic politics.

The chief of them, Minority Representation, is principally aimed to check a supposed oppression of the minority by the majority. But there is in fact no such oppression. Parties do not pass laws against each other in this country. Neither men nor opinions are ostracised. Save in the enjoyments of the profits of office, the "outs" are just as well off as the "ins."

Neither could this contrivance hinder whatever oppression there might be. When two ride together one must ride behind. It is as impossible, when the people rule, as it would be undesirable, for the minority to cope with majority. If anything, the minority has too much power already; as when by help of parliamentary rules, it blocks the wheels of major purpose, or when, by previous Gerrymandering, it holds possession of the legislature, as happens this very year (1876) in the State of New York.

If we are to give minor opinions a share of representation where shall we stop? There are more minorities than one. The communist party, the paper money party, the woman suffrage party, the temperance party, and a score of others have each an equal right to demand a share of power.

The fact is that, so long as parties exist, the more decided is party domination the better. A teetering and fearful government is, of all, the most unprofitable. Strong party rule favors steadiness of policy and vigor of administration. It fixes responsibility, clarifies and disembarrasses counsels, and gives full trial to whatever measures are tried. It tends to diminish the spirit of party itself, and is an approach toward concord. Wherever it has prevailed in this country, as in Vermont and Massachusetts, and in Virginia and South Carolina before the war, politics have been purer, and public affairs better managed, than in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where party supremacy has generally been in doubt.

Cumulative voting, multiple voting, limited voting and other the like ingenious contrivances, too complex to describe and almost too many to enumerate here, which this alarmed age has devised to correct the present impotence or betrayal of popular rule, are even less promising. They are unintelligible to the average voter. They are applicable only to the few cases where more functionaries than one of identical jurisdiction are to be voted for on a single ticket. They would tend to bestow power on special interests and transient or narrow ideas by favoring the election of extremists, while what is wanted is the representation of the mean public will. Intended in part to curtail the injurious power of rings, they would, in fact, promote it, make log-rolling a necessity, and give new advantages to sinister combination over conscientious and isolated opinion. The self-seeking, the fanatical and the narrow-minded would easily gather about their representative candidate, while generous sentiment and liberal idea would wander and waste.

But it is not necessary to speculate about the merit of these ingenuities. Experiment has already condemned them. They have been tried under a variety of circumstances, and have never worked well. Minority representation under the new constitution of Illinois has, by general confession, made matters worse rather than better. Cumulative or limited voting is a feature of the latest constitution of Pennsylvania, but is already reported against for misbehavior by a non-partisan committee of the legislature. In Great Britain at the election of school authorities in 1873 it resulted in a rivalry of religious sects; in many towns and parishes brought the public business to a dead lock; or even, as in Birmingham and Manchester, served to put the minority in power.

Special Legislation Forbidden.

With a view to stop the prevailing corruption of legislatures, *special* legislation is forbidden, or restricted, in all our latest State constitutions. Says Hon. Joseph Medill, speaking of the recent constitutional convention of Illinois, of which he was a leading member: "We have aimed to hinder and hamper legislation in the interest of monopoly and special privilege." With like view the last constitution of Pennsylvania has emasculated corporations lest her legislature should be whored. The purpose is profoundly suggestive, as an outright impeachment of democracy as now constituted.

But the device has proved impotent. The politicians of Ohio long ago learned how to evade it by enactments general in phraseology, but special in application. A good deal of the legislation of Congress, though general in terms, is necessarily particular in effect, and furnishes every temptation to self seeking, and opportunity to venality. For example, the law that levies or takes off a duty on pig iron or salt, or that raises or lowers the excise on whiskey or tobacco, is often the occasion of more corruption in Congress, and more enriches the lobby, than any charter, subsidy or contract whatever.

Moreover, special legislation is absolutely necessary in many cases. No capitol, navy yard, asylum, prison or other public institution can be located or built, no street opened or park laid out, or other public work inaugurated or furthered, without enactments of a special character. The appropriation bills of Congress and every State legislature are necessarily made up largely of such items: and it is the figures of these —as for canal repairs, armories, inebriate asylums, and the like in the State of New York—that provide the chief corruption fund in our politics.

Constitution Mending a Muddle.

The correction of constitutions that is now going on has neither philosophy nor settled direction. Take the very important matter of the appointment, as against the direct election by the people, of various public functionaries. Fifty years ago in all the states, and much later than that in most of them, the judiciary, and such state officers as treasurer and attorney-general, were chosen by the legislature, or appointed by the governor, with or without the consent and co-operation of the senate, or of a council specially established for that purpose. In the State of New York town justices and county sheriffs were created in this way down to 1824. All such offices have since been made elective: and there even arose a clamor to have postmasters, collectors of customs and public notaries also chosen by popular vote. But now, seeing how badly direct popular election works, the tide is turning, and appointment is coming into vogue again, the people demanding, as it were, to be saved from themselves. Only in the matter of the choice of the federal executive is there still some call from political theorists for an extension of the function of the ballot-box.

Alarmed by the narrow escape from civil war that we so lately had when nothing was to be found in constitution, law or practice to determine who was elected President, inventive minds have since put before the public no end of plans for avoiding the recurrence of such a danger. To my mind the last that I have seen, suggested by some bold Democratic lawyer in New York who would have a President chosen once a month by lot from among the members of Congress, is about as promising as the more complicated devices that have been evolved in the studies of college presidents. All are equally idle.

So, a strong central government is called for in one quarter, and, in another, more local autonomy. One way tried this year, another is demanded next. One city wants to have its affairs managed by commissions appointed by the state legislature; another, having already found this contrivance to partake of the general rot, demands to be let alone. Single election districts are exchanged for multiple, and then changed back again. Salaries are reduced, to lessen the temptation to office-seeking; and then increased, so that public men can afford to be honest. Terms of office are shortened, and then lengthened. When individual responsibility is lost in the numerousness of a legislative body, it is sought to be restored by making the number smaller: these found to be more easily bought up, the difficulty of purchase is sought to be increased by increasing the number to be bought. No end of guards and wards, of checks and counter-checks, are tried, and fail: the failure soon forgotten, they are tried again. The South rehearses the experiments of the North, and the West dons the cast-off garments of the East. Every where is tumult and see-saw, and, the more is done, the more needs to be done.

A noticeable feature in this fluttering struggle of democracy for its own salvation is the introduction of many new topics into our constitutions. But to extend organic law beyond the limits pointed out on a previous page (42) is to shackle freedom and embarrass progress. Said Calhoun, "The principles of government solely concern the organization and distribution of power; the rest is but expediency and sentiment." In disregard of this important truth, our latest State constitutions are big with ordinances that belong to the statute book. Thus Pennsylvania has left to its legislature little more than to make certain matter-of-course appropriations, and vote taxes to meet them. But if she thus makes it pure, she also makes it impotent, and ousts from function the spirit of the times. The ruined reputation of legislatures is the explanation and excuse for such a limitation of their functions: but let it be remembered that when constitutional conventions shall do the work of legislatures they will soon be collected by the same bad influences as legislatures are, and discover the same vices.

For the last few years

Civil Service Reform

has attracted a great deal of attention as a supposed means of effecting a material correction of public administration. The name is promising, but the thing itself is but a quack-salve, and can never touch our deep disease. Its two principal features are, (1) the application of a competitive examination on scholarship in the selection of post-office clerks, inspectors of customs, gaugers of whiskey and other the like inferior officers in the civil service; and (2) greater stability of office-tenure.

Now, as to the former, there is in fact at present no material lack of sufficient education for the work that is to be done in any of these inferior departments of the public business. Indeed, so general is this grade of attainments, that if a man able to perform the duties of any office of the above mentioned sort were advertised for in the evening papers of Rochester or Richmond, a hundred fit applicants would be on hand the next morning. Therefore some other criterion of preference among them would have to be resorted to. To employ for that purpose the possession of knowledge or accomplishments wholly extraneous to the matter in hand—such as familiarity with geography, in the case of an applicant whose official business would be to add up columns of figures; with the constitution for a weigher or a gauger of merchandise; with history for a post-office clerk, or with the niceties of grammar for a policeman—is not only ridiculous but essentially unjust, as standing in the way of worthier grounds of choice, such as family needs, high character, services already rendered to the country or society in other fields, and the like.

If this competitive examination could also be applied to determine the comparative integrity, industry and understanding of these applicants for office; and, above all, if it could be used to test the qualifications of candidates for Congress and other legislatures, and for high executive stations, then indeed it would inaugurate a reform of the civil service worth while. But this is impossible.

Besides, who shall examine the examiners? Evidently, so long as these are the mere arbitrary selection of the Postmaster General or of the Collector of Customs, they will take good care that their determinations do not clash with his wishes; and so long as they are the appointees of a party they will do partisan work.

As to more permanence of office-tenure, which is the second advertised intention of Civil Service Reform, it is a matter of very little consequence to the public welfare in the only class of cases to which Civil Service Reform has been proposed to very little consequence in the only class of cases to which it is proposed to be applied; that is, to minor executive functionaries, whose duties, whether as postmaster, officer of customs or clerk of public works, can generally be learned in a week by any man of ordinary intelligence. Moreover, how long will this feature of the project survive the coming into power of a new party? or even of another ring of politicians? When such a change shall take place, Civil Service Reform will mean simply a new distribution of offices.

The present Administration has grafted three new scions upon the original stock; viz: a rule forbidding that more than one member of a family shall have an appointment in any department of the public business; a rule that office-holders shall take no part in the work of political organization; and a repudiation of the influence of Congressmen over appointments. The first is silly. The second is an insult and a degradation to the office-holder, an unlawful piece of tyranny, and an impeachment of the free principles of democratic government. As to the third, it is evident that the President and his cabinet can seldom have any personal acquaintance with candidates for office, scattered as they are from one end of the country to the other, but must perforce depend on the advice of somebody. Now, on whom can they so safely rely for this advice as on the chosen representative in Congress of the people among whom the appointment is to be made, and who can hold their Member directly responsible for the fitness of the appointment?

But the whole matter is hardly worthy even of this short discussion; and would not have received it but for the prominence that the false pretences of politicians have been able to give the subject in the public mind. I say "false," because, while for near the length of two presidential terms the Federal administration has pretended to be gradually bringing this reform into use, it would still be difficult to put the finger on a single case where it has been honestly and serviceably applied.

Investigations and Punishments.

Under the mistaken idea that crimes against the body politic can be prevented by prosecutions and penalties as readily as offences against private persons, new enactments against them are continually heaped upon the statute book, and new investigations undertaken to find them out. Our public bodies, like Italian lazzaroni, are busy hunting their own vermin. The multitude of these inquiries and prosecutions is a confession of the prevalence of official crime, while the general immunity of the criminals is a measure of the impotence of justice. Once in a great while a defaulting treasurer or collector is forced to disgorge a moiety of his plunder; a whiskey ring is decimated by exile to Canada, or even by imprisonment—till a pardon comes,—or a thieving post-office clerk, if he have no influential friends, gets the full penalty of the law; but the great mass of the trusted functionaries that forage on the commonwealth escape unquestioned. Especially is that great class of public men secure of immunity who sell their votes or their signatures, farm out offices, make it easy for contractors, and levy tolls on whatever industry or enterprise is anyway dependent on their official action. They are protected by the clumsiness of statutes, and the difficulty of proof; by party faith, the fraternity of corruption, and the honor of thieves; and by the powerlessness, the discouragement, and the demoralization, in some degree, of public sentiment. The man who robs one of our great Express Companies is certain of arrest, conviction and punishment; but, in the whole matter of official crime, vigilance has lost its eyesight and oaths their sanctity, and the sword of the law has become a lath. Judges that ought to wear the brand of convicted felons are allowed to hide their guilt by resignation; legislators that merit the stocks still sit in seats of honor; and they who handle the public moneys shake in our faces, fearless and unabashed, the unlawful profits of their opportunities. Such instances of public wrong as Erie Railroad legislation at Albany, or Transcontinental at Washington, though stupendous in variety of faithlessness, in the size of the robbery and in the number and distinction of those engaged in it, were still more stupendous in the immunity of the criminals. Their guilt was shown by a superfluity of evidence, the very pass books of the conspirators were brought into court, and the accused stood at the bar, disdaining flight; and yet, so palsied was justice in arm and tongue, they went forth untouched and almost unrebuked.

Nor does the future promise better. The devices of politicians, as government is now constituted, will always outstrip the efforts of the people to thwart them. How to oust bad men from power is not the problem, but how to keep them from getting into power. Any less undertaking will be but to repeat the labor of Sisyphus.

As vain are the attempts that are lately made to

Outlaw the Lobby.

If the legislator were locked up in a solitary cell, the lobbyist would whisper in his ear through the keyhole, and the turnkey would bring him bribes. To a certain extent, as already suggested, the lobby is a legitimate and meritorious influence in legislation, as bringing to its aid and instruction outside intelligence and zeal. The only security against a vicious lobby is the virtue of legislators themselves.

Bi-partisan Commissions.

It has been undertaken to better public administration by dividing it up equally between parties, in Boards of Commissioners; but, notoriously, with poor results. The worst confederation of politicians that the country has ever seen got its start in an act of the State legislature in Tweed's time that gave to the county of New York a board of supervisors made up equally from both parties. Vice, cohabiting with vice, can never father virtue.

Special Elections.

It is also attempted to hinder the present injurious intrusion of national party into local affairs by separate election days. In Illinois every town of above two thousand inhabitants holds a special election for school commissioners. In my own little city democracy is mustered three times annually: in March for a municipal, in June for a school, and in November for a federal, State and county election. But the sole result has been increased expenditures, and the facilitation of place-hunting.

Plebiscites.

Disgusted with legislatures, some demand that all important public measures should be referred to direct popular vote, as at least to an honest tribunal. How badly the people fare when they thus take difficult matters into their own hands is sufficiently instanced by the still fresh history of railroad bonding, through which so many communities have wrought their own impoverishment. The false plebiscites of Napoleon the Third were not more subversive of right, or more injurious to public interests, than has generally proved the vote of the people in this country on high questions of public policy.

Non-Partisan Organizations.

Seeing that parties and politicians are obviously the chief causes of our difficulties, the better class of people have often endeavored to combine among themselves to resist these influences, and to select their own candidates for office. For this purpose "Citizens" meetings are called, "Committees of Seventy" and "Councils of Political Reform" established, and "Taxpayers" and "Independent" tickets put into the field. But all such efforts have been merely spasmodic, and have proved utterly impotent to stem the settled current of our politics. Thus the famous New York Committee of Seventy, instituted at a period of extreme public alarm and indignation, and composed of the most respectable material, dispersed itself in utter discouragement after two years of vain effort to correct the politics of the city. "This," as wrote Mayor Havemeyer to Mr James M. Brown, the president of that association, "was an abandonment of the cause of reform by the picked citizens of New York, and a confession that we are helpless and prostrate before the trained and unscrupulous politicians of both parties." The reason and inevitableness of the failure of all such efforts will be set forth in the next chapter.

Regulation of the Caucus by Law.

Viewed that the party caucus is the root of our politics, it has been attempted to correct its fraudulence by putting it under the guardianship of law. In 1866 the legislature of New York passed an act to punish bribery, intimidation and fraud at the caucus: Maryland did the like in 1867; and various other States at various times. Ohio has even gone so far as to prescribe the manner of its organization and procedure. How utterly useless for its purification all such enactments have proved, needs not to be described to any intelligent citizen. They are everywhere a dead letter.

Everybody must go to the Caucus.

We are told, also, that we are ourselves to blame for the bad state of our affairs, because we neglect to gather at the caucus in full force, and take it out of the hands of the few self-seeking politicians who now control it. Why we do not attend to this will be made clear in another place. Suffice it now to say, that, in point of fact, a large majority of the better class of voters have concluded not to attend caucuses any more, and that neither the exhortations of the press, nor the objurgations of the pulpit are likely to change their minds.

It has been proposed to defend ourselves against the caucus by going back to

Stump Nominations,

such as formerly prevailed at the South, and no doubt aided its long ascendency in our politics. That way is perhaps better than the present, but there are plenty of objections to it. These however need not be discussed; for it would be as impossible to set up that system anew to any large extent, either at the South or the North, as to restore feudalism in France.

Moral Cures.

Many look to some moral cure. "Good government," says Boston's Fourth of July orator, (1873) "is after all a question of individual morality." "We must reform ourselves first," says another teacher. Mr. Carl Schurz, in a popular lecture, lately laid our troubles to "that levity of thinking in our time which is calculated to obscure the distinction between right and wrong," and hopes for its removal only through "a renovation of our domestic life"! And so on.

If the difficulty be indeed of any such kind, its correction looks pretty hopeless; for our politics are degenerating much faster than our morality is improving; faster, too, than it can be expected to improve; for, though the institutions of government may be changed in a day, human nature alters but slowly. The fact is, however, that these thinkers have got the matter wrong end first. So far as our political and our private life have any influence on each other, it is politics that debauches the people, and not the people politics.

Others rest their hopes on more Religion.

In particular, they demand that God should be expressly recognized in the constitution, to appease his offended majesty. But history does not teach us that an infusion of the religious sentiment, of whatever sort, has ever been a benefit to politics. Look at the murderous politico-religious war that is now going on in the East! Our own pious statesmen have proved no better than our wicked.

Education.

A good many still think that democracy can be *educated* out of this mire. The "three R's," now pretty universally diffused, having proved unequal to the task, Messrs. Woolsey, Hawley, Adams and McCosh appear to lean their faith on better college education. But the fact is that nothing is more over-rated than the virtue of schooling. Education can teach a man to write, but it can never teach him to make his mark. Of half mankind it may almost be said that the more they know the less they know. Education never made an honest man out of a rogue, a truth-teller out of a liar, or a kind man out of an unfeeling. To expect the restoration of virtue to our politics by book learning, mental discipline and cultivation, is to look for the renovation of old decay by broth, corsets and paint.

Mob Law.

A sterner remedy has been proposed. Many a law-abiding man, in his indignation and despair, is ready to welcome mob law. Said an honored ex-member of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, instructed and sobered by seventy years of observation and reflection: "I see no cure for our public corruption but to lynch the malefactors; and I am ready to lend a hand." This remedy, though sharp, would not be sure. Once, it is true, in San Francisco, the people did turn successfully upon their political masters. But the situation and character of that community at the time of the Vigilance Committee were to the last degree exceptional. Not till the narrow size and isolation, the habit of individual self dependence and spontaneity, the intelligence, audacity, enterprise and desperation that characterized that community of young and mostly unhampered men shall somewhere again come together can mob law again be profitable. For New York, Chicago or New Orleans, bad off as they are, to resort to it, would be to use a remedy more dangerous even than the disease. For a State or the Nation to attempt it, would of course be suicidal, even if it were possible.

No Hope in all These.

But these, and the many other various explanations and remedies for our evil case that have been heretofore offered to the anxious inquiries of the people, hardly deserve so much attention. The explanations are incompetent, and the remedies nugatory. He who expects to see statesmanship and fidelity to the public interests restored in city, State or nation by Civil Service Reform ; the restraint of special legislation ; long presidential terms or short ; a new settlement of functions among aldermen, commissioners and mayors ; the election or the appointment of judges ; closer investigations or severer punishments ; an educational test, a religious test or a property test ; or any other the like petty and partial devices, would expect to cure the yellow fever by changing a man's shirt. Only to the uninstructed mind are the phenomena of political life, as of physical, a medley of instances. The political rot in all the larger spheres of government is identical and pervading ; it must own some single cause, as dominating as gravity itself; and it must find a single cure.

New Machinery of Democracy Required.

The truth is, the machinery of American Democracy needs to be rebuilt—not with new material, nor on a different foundation, but after a better model. All mere revamping of constitutions and jumping of charters will be vain. The old engine that once carried us smoothly along, has now, by progress of time and change of circumstances, become rusty, distorted and unfit. It will not be enough to patch the boiler, or oil the bearings, or rub up the brasses. We must either lumber along as we do now, surrounded by constant perils, or, discarding what serves us so ill, and returning to the raw material itself out of which political society is built, must find and employ a better system of popular government.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRUE ROOT OF OUR DIFFICULTIES EXPOSED.

IT is generally agreed among intelligent observers, and is indeed beyond dispute, that the chief immediate cause of the misbehavior of democracy in this country is the domination in our affairs of Organizations of Politicians. But this explanation only sets the problem a step farther back. How has Political Organization obtained this mastery? Our constitutions purport to put the people in power: through what loophole in their construction has this spurious authority intruded? and why are we so powerless to drive the usurper out? I know not where this fundamental inquiry has been well answered; nor, almost, where its answer has been attempted. It will be undertaken in this chapter.

In the first place, it is evident that anything that displays such steady, wide pervading and resistless vigor as Political Organization does, must be more than an artifice or a conspiracy. Compared with it in this regard, Free Masonry or the Order of the Jesuits, crowning examples of skillful device and combination, were as impotent and frail in the height of their success as children's cob-houses.

It is evident, also, that the power that has been able, without violating the law, to seize from the people the management of affairs, and make us do the thing we would not; and that parcels out among its company, year after year, all public function, leaving to the mass of voters only to sign its commissions, must find its opportunity in some great defect in the present construction of democracy.

Finally, the foothold of this false pretender must be sought for somewhere in the present relation of the general will to governmental function. Democracy can make so great a failure only because of some bad mechanism, whereby its strong and virtuous hands are hindered from actually reaching the helm of affairs. Its principles are irrefragable; the fault must be with its methods. Let us search for the defect—not with the star-gazing implements of theory, nor with the spade, deep-delving in buried history—but by the near and level light of our own experience. It may be that we shall find there that *experimentum crucis* which is the touch-stone alike of chemic and political truth.

Now, it is the matter of elections alone that connects the people with public authority. This is the shafting to which the intentions of democracy are geared at the one end, and political results at the other. To elect good men to office is to have good government. Vain are laws and constitutions unless they accomplish this. This proposition may sound like a truism; but nevertheless, if borne in mind, it will help us forward, like an axiom in geometry, toward more difficult conclusions.

Now, the prevailing mode of establishing political authority among us is by *direct popular vote.* We have witnessed the operation of this method of democratic rule in various spheres and under various circumstances; where has it worked best? and where worst? Is there any condition the presence or absence of which has seemed to make a good selection of public functionaries in this way easy, or difficult—the rule, or the exception? To answer this question will certainly help us along, and may even plant our feet on solid ground.

If we survey the career of American democracy in its various fields, we shall find a class of cases in which the results of popular election have satisfied every reasonable desire.—But we shall also find that this favorable issue has not depended on any of those elements that have been commonly regarded as the guarantee or keystone of democratic success. It has not followed upon the virtuousness or the intelligence of a community; for surely neither Philadelphia nor Cincinnati, the State of New York nor the State of Iowa, is lacking in either of these particulars, though from the aspect of their politics you might think so. Nor has it happened particularly where long experience has trained the people in political function, or where they come to its discharge free from the trammels of prejudice and prescription. In the sombre picture of our politics Kansas shows not darker than Pennsylvania, Louisiana than Nevada, Brooklyn than Chicago, or San Francisco than Baltimore. About equally has the old commonwealth of Massachusetts been robbed by Hartford and Erie and the Hoosac Tunnel, and young Wisconsin by farm mortgages to railroads. As little has it been peculiarly where wealth, or where scantiness abounds. California in its most golden days was only saved from anarchy by anarchy, nor is the soil of New Hampshire or Arkansas too sterile to feed corruption fat. Neither is luxury or simplicity the cause. Proud and cultivated New York is no better, and no worse off in the matter of politics than Omaha, or any other rude city of the West. Nor is it education that has determined the matter. Virginia or South Carolina before the war, where not half of the voters knew how to read and write, had no occasion to be ashamed of their political conduct, while scores of places where schools abound, as in all our Northern cities, are miracles of incompetence and ravage in public affairs.

Experimentum Crucis.

Not with any one nor all of these, nor with any other of the various conditions that have been suggested as essential have coincided the chief successes of democracy in this country, nor on them, therefore, could they have depended. The true account is very simple, and lies on the surface; and thereby, perhaps, has the more readily escaped the scrutiny of deep peering philosophy. The great instructive fact in our politics is that

Popular Elections Work Well in SMALL *and Ill in* LARGE *Constituencies.*

Nowhere have political communities ever conducted themselves better, or even perhaps as well, than have the townships, boroughs, villages and school districts of this country. In the management of their purely local interests they have almost been models of skillfulness, justice, economy and progress. New roads have been built where they were needed, the school and the school-house have been suited to fair requirement; good public functionaries have been selected, and have staid long in their places, yearly improving in skill; and the public money has seldom been lost or squandered. In short, there is no particular in the whole circle of political merits that would not be traced in their description. So, the county boards of town supervisors in the State of New York, despite the disturbing and advancing invasion of national politics, are still such a specimen of success as neither the high Senate at Washington nor any other representation of large constituencies can compare with. In these narrow fields it was that American democracy was nursed and grew her charms, and here alone may still be seen the lineaments of her native beauty.

On the other hand, it is notorious that popular election does not generally work well in its larger fields, such as State, city, Congressional and other populous constituencies. Seldom is it in these that the fittest men are chosen to office; and, by consequence, their business is seldom either intelligently, zealously or honestly conducted. Here flourish partisanship, rotation in office, the successful self-seeking of politicians, incompetency and corruption, official tyranny and official sloth.

An illustration and partial proof of this relation between the size of popular constituencies and the fitness of the men that they get to represent them, may be seen in the contrast between the customary behavior of the legislatures of Vermont and Massachusetts on the one hand, and of New York and Pennsylvania on the other. In the former cases a Member of Assembly is chosen by an average constituency of two or three hundred voters, and, in the latter, of four or five thousand. Accordingly, while the legislatures of New York and Pennsylvania have for near a generation been a chief opprobrium of American democracy, the legislatures of the other two States are still comparatively respectable. It is not claimed that in these latter the lobby is not lately getting some foothold, nor that they display much insight or comprehension about the public business, but only that they do pretty well, and, especially, that they do about the best, on the whole, that they know how.

The Causes of this Difference.

We are here on the threshold of a great discovery. To find the reason of this disparity between the successfulness of popular elections in a narrow field and in a wide one is to solve the problem of the republic.

Desire, knowledge and power are the three qualifications of human success. In which of these are the people, as members of large political constituencies, lacking, that they make so great a failure? Surely not in the first; for everybody wants good government. Is it skill that they need? or power? Do they know no better? or, by cause of some impediment, can they do no better? Are they blind? or are they bound? *They are in fact both blind and bound.* Let us consider these disabilities in turn.

In the first place

The Intelligence of the average voter is entirely unequal to the proper selection of the functionaries of Large Constituencies.

To vote intelligently we must know not only whom we are voting for, but what we are voting about:—we must have both some acquaintance with the candidate, and some understanding of the business that it is proposed to set him at. Either of these qualifications wanting, a good selection of our rulers at the ballot box must be, at best, mere matter of chance.

Now, in the case of towns and such like narrow constituencies, this sufficient knowledge, in both of its branches, nigh universally obtains. The voter both understands what the town clerk, selectman, overseer of the poor, school committee-man or pathmaster will have to do, and is well informed,—either by personal intercourse or by that neighborhood repute which is even a safer guide,—about the fitness of A or B to do it. Thus it happens that in these narrow precincts of democratic rule the man of character, discretion and authoritative mien is made moderator of the popular assembly; the exact man town clerk; the upright man justice of the peace; and so on through the whole list of civil functions: and this is the reason why the affairs of towns, villages, school districts and boroughs have ever been well managed.

But in wide constituencies, on the other hand, neither branch of this intelligence is either actual or possible. In at least nine cases out of ten, the people are substantially ignorant both of the qualities of the candidate that they vote for, and of the business that he is to undertake.

As to the men themselves whom we help elect to the State Senate, or the Federal House of Representatives, to a Governorship, or to the charge of prisons or canals, we know almost nothing whatever. I have, probably, much better information of this sort than most of my neighbors; but at the State election of 1873 (when no Governor was to be chosen,) not a name was on the ticket of either party that I had ever heard of before. The two candidates for the State Senate in my own senatorial district, for example, were as much unknown to me as though they lived in Japan. Even the wretched instruction of the newspaper reporter, and the mushroom repute that the arts of politicians can so quickly raise, were utterly lacking for my guidance. The cast of a die was as good a law as I had to go by in choosing the one or the other.

How absolute and notorious is our want of knowledge about the men we vote for in the larger political constituencies, an illustration is furnished, that would be ludicrous if the matter were not so grave, in a letter addressed (Oct. 11th, 1872,) to the electors of the State of New York by Charles O'Conor, James Emott, W. H. Peckham and Joseph H. Choate. In that communication those distinguished and patriotic gentlemen offer themselves as guides to voters throughout the State "*to enable them to select good men to vote for among party candidates for Member of Assembly.*" Now, if the people really know a tithe as much about candidates in large constituencies as our present system of elections in effect assumes that they do, this proposition had been the height of impudence and absurdity. But it was in fact neither immodest nor unreasonable; for there is not one voter in twenty that might not profitably have listened to it. And, mark! if in a constituency of that size, comprising not more than thirty thousand people, the information of the average citizen about candidates is so greatly at fault, how poorly must it answer when members of Congress, governors, and other State officers are to be chosen!

But information about candidates is not our only lack in such cases. We are equally ignorant of the business that is to be committed to their charge. The average voter has neither capacity nor opportunity for intelligent judgment about the currency or the silver question, about free trade, Indian policy, the management of public works, criminal law, municipal construction, or any other of the many difficult inquiries that now constantly await solution. This is why the people seldom know whether or not a public man has served them well; and, accordingly, pay him neither due gratitude for worthy, nor proper condemnation for unworthy deeds.

In view of this undeniable and inevitable ignorance of the great body of voters as to both men and measures in the political business of all large constituencies, the proposition of a member of the New York Constitutional Convention of 1846 to draw public functionaries by lot, in copy of a groping idea of the French Revolution, looks not so absurd.

Illustration in the Election of the Judiciary by the People.

The foregoing argument is forcibly confirmed by the instance of the sort of judges, as compared with other representatives of large constituencies, that popular election produces. It will surprise many readers, accustomed to lament the recent innovation of making judges elective, when I assert that in no other of its larger fields does democratic choice work as well as in this. But the fact is indisputable. No man can deny that the higher judges of the State of New York are far better qualified for their station than are her legislators, her executive functionaries, her representatives at Washington, or her municipal councillors. We put plenty of nincompoops at other business, but we seldom put other than good lawyers upon the bench. The reason is not far to seek. It is, in sum, that popular opinion has better means of guidance in the election of judges than it has anywhere else. For, in the first place, every voter comprehends that a judge should be an expert in the law. This narrows the circle of possible candidates, not only to lawyers, but to lawyers of experience. In the next place, lawyers are better known to the people than any other class of men. They are constantly submitted to public scrutiny in the court house, a place attractive to everybody, and where imposition has less chance than any where else on earth. The conversations of the court house steps, the discussions of the jury room, and even the shrugs of the members of the bar, assist the voter's judgment. This is why Political Organization seldom dares to set up unfit candidates for the judiciary, saving it somewhat from the degradation and disrespect that attend every other department of public administration.

The General Will in Large Constituencies is Impotent without Organizers.

But this lack of popular intelligence is not the only difficulty of democracy as now constructed in large constituencies. It is not only impossible for us to act intelligently, but it is out of the question for us to act at all, to any effect, *without the help of agents in the selection of candidates for office,* even if each voter knows whom and what he wants. There must be go-betweens to bring opinions and purposes together. The individual vote is but a chaotic atom unless it be cast in concert with others. To secure this, previous intercommunication, combination and compromise are necessary. Not otherwise can the major popular will be developed and empowered. In towns, boroughs and other small communities all this comes about spontaneously, by means of neighborhood intercourse and acquaintance. In these little camps of democracy the rank and file are thus all capable of themselves, needing neither commanding officer, adjutant nor headquarters. But when a city, or the populous ward of a city, a Congressional district, a county, or a State comes to choose its functionaries, the case is far different. No development or adjustment of opinion, nor concert of action at the polls, such as alone will enable voters of the same general way of thinking to exert their proper strength, is any way possible without special attention being given to the matter by somebody.

Take the instance of a Congressional district: Here are fifteen or twenty thousand voters, scattered over hundreds, or, often, thousands of square miles, and with no occasion or opportunity for general intercourse; or, worse still, temporarily piled together in some crowded city, where a man seldom knows his next door neighbor even by name, or speaks from one election to another with half a dozen out of the multitude with whom he is to co-operate at the polls,—how in these cases can spontaneously come about such comparison of views, harmonization of purposes, and concert of action as are needed to enable the will of the majority to find substantial expression? Let those who claim that our present system of elections is either sound or democratic, answer this question.

In the case of larger constituencies the argument is still more convincing. The constitution of the State says: "Voters, make your selection for Governor." This is but to call us to play a farce: for almost never is there a citizen whose superior fitness for that office is so widely recognized that the majority of the people would spontaneously vote for him;—and, till the majority somehow come together, democracy is in the lurch. Plenty of aspirants to the place there always will be, each with a following of friends and admirers; but there is now no way, outside of party organization, of estimating the comparative support of each, and thus settling who ought to step back. Even when a major preference exists, it has no way of arriving at self-consciousness, or of leading its scattered forces to victory. Without some assisting means of ascertainment and combination, the intentions of the most intelligent State in New England would be as impotent as the vague instincts of the new-enfranchised negroes without the aid of the carpet-bagger to organize them.

The present arrangement for choosing a President is even more ridiculous in this regard. The letter of the law intends that each voter should select one man in each Congressional district of his State, and two for the State at large, to represent him in this important business. Now, aside from the fact that not one voter in a thousand is capable of discharging this duty decently well on his own knowledge and judgment, it is too plain to need argument that the main popular will, or anything near it, could never reach expression in that way. If each voter were actually left, as the law leaves him, to fix his own ticket for Presidential Electors in any State, what a pretty muss would democracy be in! There are no two men in the State of New York that would vote together, nor a single Congressional district where any citizen would have a decent plurality of voices.

Hence Political Organization.

It is in this latter defect of our present system that political organization takes its root. The people's necessity is the politician's opportunity. The party organizer is no mere interloper. His aid is invoked by democracy itself as now constructed. The machinery of our present politics supplies a want. It is more a growth than a device; rather a rally of nature than an exploit of art. Its paternity has been laid to the Albany Regency, but that distinguished cabal was at best but its foster-parent,—as the domestic bird sometimes warms into life the embryo king of the air. The absolute impotence of the general will, under our present system of elections, of itself to unite upon its functionaries in large constituencies, creates that vacuum which nature abhors; and a supplementary agency, as spontaneous as irresistible, has poured in to fill the void.

Thus it happens that the people, blindly groping otherwise, are now led about by Rings of Politicians.

The Three Frauds of our Present System of Democracy.

In fine, I bring against the plan of direct popular election in large constituencies the accusation that it involves three lies. It supposes (1) that the elector knows whom he is voting for, (2) that he comprehends what he is voting about, and (3) that his vote will have its proper weight without preliminary consultation and arrangement with other voters; each of which assumptions in the vast majority of cases is absolutely false. The present actual fact is, that, *at the dictate of leaders whom we have not chosen, we vote for candidates whom we do not know, to discharge duties that we can not understand.* Thus our system huddles in its bosom as many falsehoods as Cæsarism, communism and Bourbonism altogether. If good government can stand on such fraudulent tripod, then truth itself will prove a liar. If the science of politics have nothing better than this to offer, then let it forever hold its peace. Here is the bad mechanism, the rotten spot, the causing cause, heretofore unproclaimed, at least with any loud distinctness, in search of which we set out. Here is the fountain—let patriotism mark the statement, and logic dispute it if it dare—of all our woes. Surely it is an ample source. It accounts for things otherwise unaccountable,—for the general boil and dirtiness of our politics; for fraudulent elections and for bad appointments, for high taxes and for repudiation, for the follies of legislation, the wrongs of judgment and the weakness of execution that so constantly mark our present career; for the seeming general apathy of the people, and for their impotence when spasmodically aroused; and for a thousand other things that work damage, danger, ignominy and chagrin to American democracy. This it is that explains why the shining promises of the Western world are so darkened in the eyes of Europe, and why democracy in all past time has turned out a mirage, or even that *ignis fatuus* that but draws its followers constantly deeper into the mire.

The special influence of each of these fallacies varies with different cases, though never in any large constituency is it wholly lacking, however obscured it may be to the common view by superficial mixed phenomena. For a single example: the voters in a ward of some small city, like Yonkers or Richmond, know pretty well what citizens are fittest for aldermen, and have a fair idea of what an alderman has to do, so that there is here no serious lack of competency about either "men" or "measures." But the special difficulty in such cases is, that there is no way for the majority, or any considerable portion of them, to unite upon candidates at the polls without some means of collecting their opinions and organizing their strength, —which our present constitutions fail to provide.

This Misbehavior of our Present System not Anticipated.

That the founders of the republic did not foresee this ill-demeanor of their plan of democracy is no way strange. Large popular constituencies were almost unknown to them. They had no cities of much size. Only in two of the smallest of the Colonies,—Rhode Island and Connecticut,—was the chief magistrate elected by the people. All other high functionaries, such as councillors and judges, were everywhere appointed by the crown, the proprietor or the governor. In towns, school districts, parishes and borough alone had direct general suffrage had much trial. Here its results left nothing to be desired. Most natural was it therefore, when the people attained to independence, to extend the method to wider spaces. The way that had led to a good choice of constables and selectmen would suffice, it was innocently thought, to choose Members of Congress and Governors by. But it was forgotten that the principles of construction that answer to bridge a streamlet may break down when a river is to be spanned. It has indisputably turned out that the method of democracy that did so well, and still does so well as applied to small communities and their simple concerns, is unsuited to the wider fields and more complex relations of political society to which it has been extended. We have, in a sense, outgrown our clothes.

Political Society in the Early Period of the Republic.

But why, it may be asked, were we so long free from the tyranny of Political Organizations, if, as is argued above, they are a native product of the situation? The answer is, that down to less than fifty years ago the American people were substantially under personal leadership. Colonial society was profoundly and pervasively impregnated with the principle of aristocracy. History, the traditions of the mother country, and the existing methods of government, all sustained the law of subordination in politics. Virginia and Connecticut were hardly less oligarchic, in sentiment and practice, than Norfolk and Devon. Opinion had its sampler from headquarters, and policy its laying-out. None but men of mark and standing aspired to public place. Political equality, it should be remembered, was then practically unknown in every part of the world. It was but the echo of distant history, the dream of closet speculation, or the vague yearning of instinct or sympathy.

Accordingly, in none of the first State constitutions was suffrage made universal, even for the whites. On the contrary, in South Carolina, Virginia, Rhode Island, and many others of the new-born independencies, it was quite narrowly restricted; and in New York it was far from complete down to thirty years ago. Meantime, the institution of slavery in half of the nation furnished an example of the political subjection of one class of men to another that could but strengthen the principle of aristocracy among the ruling race. Thus the "white trash" at the South were as much cyphers politically as the negroes themselves.

The authority of the few over the many was not diminished, but rather augmented, by the events of the Revolution. That great political movement, like nigh every other of much account that history records, was the issue and ward of a few superior spirits, most of whom were already prominent on the public stage, and therefore the more readily attracted the support of the people. The success of their bold undertaking gave new vigor to their influence, and crown to their authority, and, while their generation lasted, they maintained a virtual control over the fortunes of the young republic. It is worth notice, too, that this was not through military, but civil prestige chiefly,—not through the charms and accidents of war, but the sober considerations of civil life. As proof, we had no military President after Washington till Jackson, though we have had plenty of them since the advent of Political Organization. This submission of the many to a few pervaded all the spheres of democracy down to above forty years ago. I myself well remember when each State, county and town owned its political magnates,—men of character, public consideration, experience, social status, wealth, or other worthy attributes,—whose right and duty to manage the public business no man contested.

In that happy period personal influence was nourished by personal intercourse. In Jefferson's time and neighborhood, according to his last and best biographer, Mr. Parton, it was the custom of public men to keep open house for all their constituents, and to visit them in turn. Said a Northern politician of the old style to me: "When I was in public life, forty years ago, I knew by name and face every one of the three thousand voters in my Assembly district."

Thus the chief elements of our politics down to the time of Monroe were personal power and personal adhesion. Something, indeed, of these lingered thereafter, refusing to give place to the new order of things, till about the period when Clay, Webster, Calhoun, Wright and Benton went to a disappointed grave, taking with them a great part, it would seem, both of the political ambition of patriotic genius and of the hero-worship of the common mind.

Even parties were formerly little more than a clannish adhesion and following. Hence, in part, the marked bitterness of party strife in those days.

To the same supreme influence of personality and position during the first half century of the republic it was in great part due that public station was somewhat customarily passed to the next in official order, as to a lawful heir. Thus President John Adams was Vice-president first; as was also Jefferson. Madison was Jefferson's Secretary of State; Monroe, Madison's; and John Quincy Adams, Monroe's. In like manner most commonly the lieutenant-governor came to be governor; the deputy, sheriff; and so on.

Change about the time of Monroe.

But all things change. The great attendance that had nursed the Revolution, and taught the nation how to walk, perished in its turn. Genius is seldom propagated, or social consideration bequeathed; nor could wealth be the monopoly of families while a fertile continent of soil, its solidest foundation, lay open to every occupancy. In the period of Monroe, all that stood for that strong authority of nature's chiefs which at the beginning of the century gave law to the young republic was a sort of bureaucracy, composed of inferior or degenerate stock, spiritless or decrepit. The inheritance of power had lapsed, and all political attachments were loosened from the minds of men. Meanwhile, beyond the Alleghanies, was gathering a vast multitude who had never seen Moses, and who looked for a new dispensation. The old king was dying, but the new was not yet alive.

This was the famed "Era of good feeling." A calm pervaded the political sky. Thus nature rests herself when she prepares a new birth. From this still peace, like some magnetic crystal from a neutral and quiet menstruum, issued the genius of Political Organization.

History of Political Organization.

Physiology tells us that life is developed from a centre; and, accordingly, it was at the Federal capital that this new vitality first showed itself, pointing out, in Congressional party caucus, fit candidates for President and Vice-president, to uninformed, vague and helpless democratic wish. So clumsy and incompetent were its early movements, as belongs to nature's highest products in their dawn, that the choice of a successor to Monroe lapsed from the hands of Presidential Electors, to whom by the intention of the framers of our government it belonged, and who alone could claim to represent the people for this purpose, to the House of Representatives. This defect of popular power, together with the discreditable and unsatisfactory contest that ensued in that body, at once exposed a fault in our written system, and gave countenance and stimulus to the unchartered power that was rising to supplant it.

But the spirit of American democracy could not long be satisfied that a close corporation, like Congress, should initiate and direct its course in the vast and various career that was before it. Besides, the land was full of ambitious men who desired to compete for the preferments that now lay vacant. They revolted against the dictation of capitols. Their strength was at home, and they demanded that nominations for office should originate there. This was fair to them, and fair to the people at large.

But how, in large constituencies, should popular sentiment be sounded, or express itself? Obviously, the body of a party, and still more of the whole people, could not gather in person at one place to settle upon a candidate for governor, member of Congress or county sheriff. A delegation of authority must therefore be resorted to. Democracy must be divided into sections narrow enough for the actual assemblage of voters in caucus for the selection of deputies to act for them in a *nominating* convention. The minor civil divisions of the country, such as towns, wards and boroughs, furnished facilities to hand for this requisite distribution and integration of democratic authority. In the cases where a delegation from each of these narrow precincts would make an unwieldy body, or when on account of distance it would be difficult for them all to attend, as in the case of a State or a Presidential nomination, this delegation of power evidently had need to be still farther delegated. Accordingly, in the State of New York, for example, the delegates of the popular caucus meet by Assembly districts to elect delegates to a State convention, which convention in turn appoints a delegation to the Presidential convention.

This is a short account merely of the *raison d'etre* of Political Organization, such as we now see it. To narrate the story of its growth, with any detail of time, place and circumstance, would be equally tedious to the writer and the reader. Let it suffice to say, in this regard, that, though the system was first publicly propounded to the people by the famed Albany Regency in the State of New York, through its organ the Albany Argus, about fifty years ago, and was there first perfected and brought into general use, it showed itself nigh contemporaneously throughout the whole democratic North; and, by virtue of its naturalness and necessity, soon became the universal method of establishing candidacy for all elective offices of wide jurisdiction. In the aristocratic South it met with more delay, but is now fast making up lost time.

A brief description of the machinery of Political Organization will here be worth while; for, though we all are the witnesses and victims of its power, but few of us are familiar with its methods, principles and endowments. I myself knew little about them till circumstances made me an office-holder, and by consequence a politician. That Political Organization was a means of party order and efficiency I was well aware, but I did not know that it was the master of parties. I was not ignorant that self-seeking and fraud had a place in its management, but I did not know that they were its very inspiration. Long seeking why our politics so misbehave, I did not find out till I was made a member of this its privy council, and took a hand in the management of its business.

Political Organization has three essential parts, viz: the Caucus, the Convention and the Committee.

The Caucus

is the germ of our present political life; and, like the cell in anatomy, bears within itself all the properties of the final structure. And, as, in the animal or vegetable frame, that elementary collection of vital forces may prove the mother of healthy tissue, or may beget vile smut or horrid cancer, so in the body politic, while the gathering of the people for consultation and combined action is the very birth-place of true democracy, the party Caucus that stands for it now is but a nest of fraud. No vice indeed is lacking to it. By force of activity and expertness, a handful of mercenary politicians, destitute most often of every claim to respectability, habitually get charge of this native cradle of popular government. In the interest of these the Caucus is often called too early for popular interest, or too late for popular combination, unexpectedly, or at an hour or place inconvenient for general attendance. It is always partisan, not general, and, in the majority of cases, is packed with the mere adherents of a person or a faction. Citizens of character and property notoriously stay away, while the thriftless and discredited, fanatics, mercenaries, minors and the like, attend in full numbers.

The Caucus assembled, its *organization* is the next opportunity of the politician. "To have the organization" in politics is about equivalent to having possession in law. It is to appoint the presiding officer, order procedure, get charge of the polls, count the votes and make up the record. When the party is at peace within itself, this is left to the chairman of the party committee; but, when there is a war of factions or personal ambitions, it is the prize of superior preparation, skill, audacity or violence. In either case the mass of voters have little or nothing to do with it. I have known half a dozen boys to get control of the organization at a Caucus, and make an alderman,—on account of his interest in base-ball.

The Caucus organized, lawlessness is still its only law. Repeating, multiple-voting, the stuffing of the ballot-box and the sudden turning of it, false counting, intimidation, brutality, and other like enormities, constantly thwart or impede a fair and free expression of the general will.

I well remember the first Caucus that I ever went to, now some twenty years ago. I went with the innocent hope of helping to get a better officering of my ward. Arrived, at the hour appointed, in a dimly lighted and foul smelling room, I found an expert of Political Organization already in possession of the gavel, tellers appointed, and a raft of idlers and the retainers of politicians, with hardly a worthy citizen among them, crowding about the polls, with printed ticket in hand; and, before an unprepared voter could think what to do, the hat was turned, the result of the count of ballots declared, the lights blown out, and the Caucus ended. Some years later I was desirous of being made School Commissioner, with a view to help improve public education in quality and abate its cost. The undertaking looked the more feasible because the Commission had been constructed with a special view to escape the influence of partisan politics. Besides, I was a tax-payer, and an old resident of respectability, had quite a drove of children to educate, and was known to be a man of some schooling myself. I spoke to a number of my neighbors about it, who all agreed that I was the very sort of man they wanted for the office. I looked upon myself as already as good as nominated: and, the way things were situated, nomination was equivalent to election. But when I got to the Caucus I found a ring of men, each with his clique of personal friends and dependents, already surrounding and engrossing the polls,—one of whom had books and stationery to sell to the Board of Education,—another desks, furnaces or other furniture for school-houses,—another fuel, and so on, and who had already arranged among themselves which of them should be the nominee. The result was, that we got a man who had neither children, property, education nor public esteem. In not one of the Caucuses that I have ever attended has there been a fair and full expression of the popular will, but always sinister preparation and sinister methods. Even when, as sometimes in rural regions, the Caucus is still conducted honestly, it is seldom an unembarrassed consultation, where general opinion asserts itself, but a mere arena for the rival efforts of aspirants to office. Even the "good names" that are frequently put on the ticket of delegates to "strengthen" it, most often turn out to be merely the representatives of a candidate, a clique, or a special interest.

This is no unjust, though a very incomplete picture of the Caucus; which now, as lately said a distinguished Baltimore judge when some of its iniquities were brought before him, "has come to be a part of our political system, constituting the almost universal mode by which candidates are brought before the public for their suffrage. If it is tainted, our political institutions are contaminated at their source."

The Convention.

The delegates of the Caucus constitute the Convention, either directly or by farther delegation. In the larger states this institution generally has three grades: as, for instance, in the State of New York, (1) the Assembly District Convention, which is composed of the immediate deputies of the Caucus; (2) the Congressional Convention, to which the former body sends a delegation; and (3) the Presidential Convention, where assemble the representatives of the latter from all parts of the nation.

Also, the first two grades of this representation have each several spheres,—the Caucus sending one delegate, or set of delegates, to a city, town or ward Convention, another to a county Convention, another to an Assembly Convention, and so on;—each field of civil jurisdiction having its separate assembly, composed of the Caucus delegates within it. So, in the same State, the second grade of the Convention has at least three spheres, determined by a like rule, viz: a Congressional, a judicial and a State. In large cities a fourth is added, by transference from the first grade, for the nomination of mayor and other high officers of the municipality. In other States the arrangement is often somewhat different, both as to the gradation and the spheres of the Convention.

The Convention is now the knot of all high political empire in this country. It is here that the chief legislative, judicial and executive officers are in effect appointed, and public policy and administration marked out. Here, accordingly, politicians gather, personally or by deputy; for to have a seat in the Convention is a certificate of party power that will bring profit some day, if not immediately.

The vices of the Caucus are repeated in the Convention, only that they swell by propagation upwards. Sometimes at the Caucuses an aspirant or a *coterie* has elected a clear majority of friendly delegates, in which case the business of the Convention is but to record the victory: but far more often, especially in the grades of Conventions more removed from the people, the mastery and profits of politics still remain to be contended for. Then a market is opened that beats Wall Street and Chatham Row. Every public interest and every personal influence or ambition has its value, to buy, or sell, or swap. To cheat brings no imputation here, but only to be cheated. High prices are not uncommon in this mart. By credible accounts, as much as one hundred thousand dollars has been paid to get nominated by the Convention of the dominant party for Clerk, Register or Sheriff of the County of New York, half that sum for Treasurer of Pennsylvania, and, in proportion to their opportunities, for other the like offices all over the country. A nomination to Congress from the lean pastures of Vermont or New Hampshire can sometimes be had for a thousand dollars or so; but in the golden fields of California and Nevada it may cost fifty thousand. In the day, which threatens to be near, when the Chief Magistracy of the Republic will be set up at auction, as was Rome's imperial purple once, we shall see still larger transactions.

Not only are elective offices bought and sold in the Convention, but there also, in effect, politicians divide among themselves diplomacy, cabinet appointments, the supervision of banking, insurance, education, public charities and public health, and every other place of appointment. Here, too, the charge of the public moneys is appropriated, the rich mine of the canal staked off, and the settlement of all public jobs substantially agreed on. Here gather also they who look to law to advance their interests, by tariff, bounty, subsidy, appropriation or altered tax.

In no grade of the Convention are the opinions, desires or interests of the mass of the people taken much into account,—

save as a thing of commercial availability to politicians. In every stage it is but a new betrayal of democracy.

The Committee.

Political Organization is kept alive from election to election by the Party Committee. In the smaller civil divisions, such as towns and wards, this agency is established by the Caucus, or, rather, by its managers; in the larger, by the Convention in its various grades and spheres. In view of its important duties, the Committee is always made up of men of consideration in the party, and of experience in politics. It fixes the time and place for the Caucus and the Convention, and has the initiative in organizing them. It keeps the party record and holds the party seal. It levies assessments on office-holders and contractors, actual or expectant, and disburses the proceeds. It belongs to it to manage the press, to encourage or repress individual aspirations, to reconcile factions, and, in general, to oversee the party campaign. Its endorsement carries great weight in the councils of the party, and not seldom determines the distribution of political power and profit. Besides, the Committee-man is himself in the line of promotion, as entitled to reward from Political Organization for services in its behalf. There is no surer entry to successful political life than to get to be a member of the Committee.

The Platform

must also be mentioned as an important instrument in Political Organization. Like a creed in religion, it serves in our politics both as a flag and a spell. Investigators in physiology tell us that, if you take a hen and give her neck a disconcerting twist, and then draw a chalk mark before her eyes, that conspicuous sign becomes the cynosure of her attention, and renders the poor thing passive in your hands. Something thus it is that no small share of voters, with minds half emotional and half mechanical, are dazzled and enslaved by the Platform that politicians set before them. To make it the more influential, as seeming to the people to be their own voice, each latest phrase or fashion of popular impulse or opinion, however unjust, superficial or transitory,—such as Government money, Labor reform, Woman suffrage, Grangerdom, and Internal improvements that shall make every farm a village and every village a city, is given a place,—at least upon its edge. Witness all the recent platforms of our two great parties.—None the less is this contrivance the sheer device and dictate of politicians. Thus in 1864, as the reader may remember, the body of the Democratic party waited for the Resolutions of the Chicago Convention to tell them what they thought in that supreme crisis of the Republic; and fain adopted them, though they brought more evils to the party than did the fateful Trojan horse to Troy.

Rings.

The foregoing is the essential frame-work of Political Organization. But it has a thousand accessory constructions—a secret service, a power behind the throne, wheels within wheels. The lobby at Washington, at every State Capitol and every City Hall, is its legitimate progeny, its companion and its help. Credit Mobilier, Tammany Hall, the Samana lease, Tweed's dynasty, League Island, Land Office and Indian Agency Rings, Rings of contractors, Rings to raise the fees of sheriffs, or the income of county treasurers or surrogates, and the uncounted other foul alliances of self-seeking that are so constantly formed to rob the people in every department of the public business, are part and parcel of this domination.

Politicians.

The Politicians that manage this business are of many sorts. One kind gathers the Caucus, another regulates it, and another uses it. Some go to the Convention to buy, and some to be bought. There is the horse-shed Politician of the country, and the corner-grocery Politician of the city; the Politician of the executive ante-room, and the Politician of the legislative lobby: he who bribes an election clerk with money, and he who seduces him with promises. There is the cajoler of the people and the attorney of corporations, the raving partisan—though never too heady for any profitable arrangement—the hired editor, the false philanthropist—appropriating what he was entrusted to dispense—and, finally, the so-called " scientist "—the thing as bad as the word—who, mounted on the toad-stool of current opinion, watches, like a toad, for some savory morsel to come within the reach of his glib tongue.

The perfect type of the American Politician is a mixture of the demagogue, the intriguer and the jobber; flattering the people, locking arms with every surrounding influence, and, all the while, looking out for himself. The demagogue of history pure and simple, is now pretty much relegated to the jejune service of labor-unions and grangerdom: intrigue, ancient arbiter of courts, can never span alone a broad democracy: neither can mere jobbery make lasting headway anywhere. But so various qualifications rarely meet in one person. Therefore politicians generally work in gangs, rounding the ring of power. Even members of opposing parties join in a common hunt, and amicably divide among themselves the conquered quarry. The profits of the Credit Mobilier were traced about equally to the pockets of Democratic and Republican politicians.

The Politician, though sometimes a mere hanger-on of respectable society, most often has, in form at least, some regular occupation. He is a lazy or thriftless farmer or mechanic, an unprosperous tradesman, a lawyer short of clients, or a doctor of patients, a preacher of religion for a living, or a failed projector. Seldom does he represent the industry, property or aspirations of the country. Especially is he a man who can say, or unsay,—applauding any cause that is in favor, and turning the cold shoulder on it when it needs a champion.

Politics, by right, should be the most honored of occupations, at least in a democracy; but to call a man a Politician in this country now is to put him in discredit. No doubt, honorable men now and then still engage in the business, moved by patriotism and laudable ambition; but they are not numerous.

Besides, no man can enter the guild of politicians except by their consent, and through approaches where fraud is chief gate-keeper. With these he must make alliance; and here must he leave his pledge. Entered, all the surroundings favor his corruption, and no common man, however pure before, can resist them. A decent gratitude compels him to repay with favor whoever has aided him. Besides, he can meet unscrupulous adversaries only with unscrupulous weapons. This contagion, obligation and necessity of our present politics bring men to infamy who under a better star would leave to their children an untarnished name.

The Number of Politicians,

compared with the whole number of voters, is very small. Half a dozen practiced hands at the most steer the Caucus, and as few the Convention, and these steer the polls. Not one voter in a hundred has anything more than a nominal part in making a legislator, governor or judge.

The Machinery of Political Organization

has now reached great perfection. It is suited to every situation, and is equal to every emergency. So long ago as twenty years it sufficed to hold together the mass of the old Whig party, under a change of principles nigh as utter as of name. At the present time its construction is so complete that, like the ready-made houses that Chicago carpenters send out to settlers on the prairie, it is carried into every new territory and reconstructed State, and set up by Federal officials and political adventurers, between sun and sun. Thus has the infancy of Nevada, Colorado and the rest been scarred as by an inherited pox; and thus it is, even more than by the enfranchisement of the negro, that States in the South which once could boast of governments never excelled in purity, intelligence and economy, are now (1875) by-words of reproach to democratic rule.

Allies of Political Organization.

Three auxiliaries have greatly helped to raise Political Organization to its present pitch of power, and now sustain it there.

The first of them is

The Spoils.

The public expenditure is the nursing-bottle of our politics. Political Organization, as Napoleon said of armies, travels on its belly. Its power has matured *pari passu* with the extension of the rule that "to the victors belong the spoils." It is this injurious doctrine, the application of which has now spread from the arena of Federal politics, where it originated, to the business of every State, county, city and town, that keeps politicians to their work.

But let not its honest author, or Marcy, the great secretary of his heir and successor who gave it formula, be hastily blamed. In Jackson's period office was becoming a prescription. A proud and lethargic bureaucracy, which of all the forms of government is about the worst, threatened to thwart the will of the people, in whose general integrity and competence for political business that generous and courageous spirit put great trust. Add, that he only precipitated an inevitable concomitant of party warfare in democratic society. In a government of castes the brotherhood of caste takes care of caste in every change of power; as now we see in England, where the body of public occupation is a life estate, whoever is Prime Minister, and however the House of Commons may be composed. But in the promiscuous competition of our system, neither social relations nor neutral position can expect much consideration. Democracy is a warfare of native powers, and in all of nature's wars the conqueror enjoys his conquest.

The amount of political spoil has become enormous. Said Thomas H. Benton in 1828: "The patronage of the federal government at the beginning was founded on a revenue of two million dollars. It is now operating on twenty-two million, and within the life time of many now living must operate on fifty million." They who heard this prophecy are not yet all dead, but already that patronage operates on six times the predicted sum. Still more rapid has been the augment of this power in municipalities and other minor spheres of government. In all its relations, government in this country now takes in and pays out a good half billion of money yearly. This is at the rate of above sixty dollars for every voter. It is true that about one-third of the sum is levied to pay the interest on public debts, but there is not a dollar of it all but what in its collection or disbursement, or in both, leaves some percentage, by way of salary, fees, commissions, advantages or opportunities, in the hands of Politicians. The other two-thirds of this enormous expenditure are in great part their mere patrimony and nourishment. It certainly is not an exaggerated estimate, that the immediate profits of political rule equal a fourth part of the whole public revenues. Thus the average house-holder is taxed above fifteen dollars a year—to grease the axles and fuel the boiler of the Engine of Political Organization.

To these immediate spoils is to be added a great share of the enormous value of land grants, steamboat subsidies and other bounties, and of innumerable rich franchises and advantageous charters about ferries, street and other railroads, railroad bridges, gas companies, savings banks and a thousand other like interests and opportunities that are now more or less preferentially bestowed by legislatures and other political authorities. Add, also, to these legalized gains, the unlawful profits that are pocketed by lobbies and rings, strikers and black-mailers, the favored referees of political judges, the venal examiners of banks and insurance companies, double-dealing detectives, the false guardians of the revenues at the custom house, the distillery and the tobacco factory, and many more the like. To rightly estimate what these amount to, we must remember how enormously in modern times,—by the extension of commerce, the increased magnitude of public works, the growing diversity of corporate undertakings, and other such matters,—the volume of values that are more or less dependent on the conscience of government officials has been augmented.

Nor is this all; no small part of the general capital and occupation of the country hangs on the action of legislatures; which brings great profit to those who are in political control. Hundreds of millions of money obey the navigation and the excise laws for example, and thousands of millions the tariff. Who can count the revenue that politicians in and out of Congress, foreknowing or preparing the action of government, have got by changes in the tax on whiskey and tobacco? Or, to take the case of protection to home industry, it is safe to say,—without discussing the philosophy of the system, or whether the money comes from the pocket of denizens or foreigners,—that thousands of fortunes are now in hands where they would never be under the policy of free trade. Great cities owe their growth and very existence to the tariff.

Taking all these things together, it is reasonable to estimate that Political Organization in effect now handles one-fourth part of the income of the country ; and that of this a quarter, in one way and another, sticks to the fingers of Politicians. This explains, and I know not what else can, why some fifty thousand of them in 1876 gathered at Cincinnati, and another fifty thousand at St. Louis, to watch or share the nomination of a President. This is at once the food and stimulus which sustain and push forward Political Organization, and that "cohesive power of the plunder" which now alone holds parties together.

The next great auxiliary of Political Organization is the

Power of Office.

The number of men in the pay of the Federal government itself is now nearly one hundred thousand ; and States, counties and cities altogether must furnish at least as many more office-holders. Says the San Francisco Bulletin: "We have in round numbers thirteen hundred officers in our local government. If to these are added State and Federal functionaries, resident in the city, it will make a total of above two thousand." The tax-payers of New York City number less than fifty thousand ; its corporate employes over thirteen thousand. On the whole, hardly less than one voter in twenty is an office-holder, and is dependent for his place on Political Organization.

All these must serve their great creator. Formerly it was viewed as unbecoming for a man in public station to meddle with the Caucus and the Convention, or to do more at the polls than drop a silent vote. But now the Office-holder is the most active of all in the political arena. Fear, hope, gratitude and pride compel him to unusual exertion. Says the Rome Sentinel: "The whole Republican State Committee (N. Y. 1873) is composed of office-holders, with the single exception of a teller in a national bank." Allowing what you please for partisan exaggeration, the statement is significant. Notoriously, the body of the Presidential Convention at Cincinnati in 1876, as well as of its attendants, touters and duffers, was made up of government employees. Every office-holder must be at the service, in purse, time and endeavor, of the Political Organization to which he owes his place. Lack of skill, attention or integrity in true official duty is constantly overlooked, but never dereliction here.

Out of the income of each official, from a member of the federal cabinet to the tipstaff of a police court, must be handed over a good percentage to carry on the party campaign. In the Presidential contest of 1872, as no doubt in the present, (1876,) foreign ministers and consuls were systematically assessed by the Central Republican Committee at Washington, in proportion to their official income, in aid of the party in power. So national banks throughout the land were called on to hand over, and did hand over, each a required quotum. It appeared, in the Credit Mobilier investigation, that a Vice-president regularly sent a thousand dollars to the aid of Party Organization in Indiana. That the sum turned out to be just the equal of a quarterly installment of gratitude or prudence from a post office contractor to that influential functionary, regularly paid, only adds to the instruction of the incident, as furnishing new proof of the wide-ramifying influence of Office.

The Officeholder must not only pay but work,—he of the smaller sort at the Caucus and the polls, and he of the bigger, at the Convention and on the stump. There is no distributor of letters but what runs his legs off when a Federal contest impends. Boutwells and Bristows desert the Treasury, Camerons and Robesons the Army and Navy, and Chandlers the Interior, to furnish orators and wire-pullers to aid the party in power. Meanwhile Attorneys-general, like Williams, Ackerman and Taft, supply the requisite interpretation of the law. The President himself, with all his function, comes to the help of the power that has made him. From the unlawful franking of electioneering documents by departmental functionaries to the sale of the intentions of the public treasury in Wall Street, and to the still greater crime of making the employment of labor on public works dependent on fealty to the powers that be, the whole public service is constantly wrested from democratic right to the aid of Office. That this influence is one-sided, by no means alters the political situation. Thus the public treasury is the paymaster of Political Organization; and thus democracy, as now constructed, but "wings the shaft that quivers in its heart."

The activity and influence of Office increase at every election. From a dependent on the popular poll, the officeholder is fast becoming its master. This perilous condition of our politics has not been unforeseen. Webster and Benton, and many of their great Democratic and Whig compatriots warned us against it. So long ago as 1826, a committee of the Federal Senate, with a view to hinder or escape it, proposed, by constitutional provision, to limit the President to a single term. Far-sighted Andrew Jackson, in each of eight annual messages to Congress, recommended the same thing; and was constantly supported in the recommendation by his great antagonist and compeer, Henry Clay. De Tocqueville declared this limitation to be a necessity; and the late Confederate States of the South, which, whatever their failure, were not wanting in political intelligence, adopted it into their organic law. All along, this *one Presidential term* has been a subject of general discussion; and could the principle of it be so applied as to shut out every officeholder from getting a second commission, the influence of office in our politics would no doubt be greatly diminished.—All this was true in 1876, when these paragraphs were written, and is substantially true now, despite the well meant but puerile corrections of the present administration. The party that forbids its officeholders to participate in the work of Political Organization will quickly extinguish itself forever.

The Press

is the third ally of Political Organization. This modern creation owns all the faculties of ancient fable: a hundred hands, uncounted eyes, untiring strength, immortal youth. It adds to these the illusion of the ventriloquist:—when it speaks we seem to hear the people speak, forgetful that its words issue from its own belly. The newspaper is the familiar of every fireside, and furnishes more than half our reading. It is therefore the master of reputation in democratic politics, both for persons and ideas. To possess its favor is to be called great and good; to lack it, oblivion at the best. This tremendous engine, once looked upon as the chief security of freedom, has now become in an enormous degree, as demagogue and party priest, the instrument of our enslavement. Political Organizers, observing its power, have taken it into their employ, till now the number of public journals in the country that they do not control by subsidy or promise may almost be counted on the fingers. Especially have they seduced this virtuous daughter of liberty to be their mistress by bestowing upon her great part of the many sinecures and easy berths in the public service. In the State of New York, for example, full half of the easy and profitable administration of the internal revenue was distributed among the editors and proprietors of newspapers. In my own town at the present moment (1876) the administration journal is served by three federal functionaries, who get their pay from the public treasury. It is the same with its democratic adversary, whenever and so far as its party gets power in city, county or State. In the various spheres of politics incredible sums are wasted in unnecessary and extravagant printing for the support and subjugation of the press. The pay roll of Tweed & Co. contained the names of eighty-nine of the newspapers of the city of New York,—hardly three righteous being left. From 1867 to 1871 official printing and advertising cost the tax-payers there above a million dollars a year, while for all proper purposes a tenth of the sum was ample. And yet that ring of plunderers was broken, it is said, because it did not pay editors enough to suppress the exposure of its transactions. The case is about the same, in Rochester, San Francisco, Savannah and every other city. It is notorious that at Albany, Harrisburgh, Columbus, Indianapolis and other State capitals political patronage has always been a mine of wealth to party journals. The new established government of the District of Columbia, Benjamin of our politics, has surpassed all its older brethren in this field of debauchment.

To these official subsidies are to be added the purse of the party out of office, and the personal patronage and douceurs of political aspirants. With this and with that, it is no slander to say that the body of newspaperdom is to-day the ally and servitor of Political Organization.

The Mightiness of Political Organization.

Thus based on a deep necessity of democratic politics that our present method of elections leaves unsupplied, and buttressed round by great supports that strengthen with time, Political Organization has now become the master of our career.

What started as a tender has become the flag ship. Aimed at first to collect and empower the will of the people, it now has a will of its own. It is no longer the herald, but the prince himself. The citizens of New York or New Orleans are not so subject to its police and its *posse comitatus* as they are to the Caucus and Convention. It was not the individuals, Tweed, Conolly and Hall, that held an imperial city in their grip, exchanged embassies with the State capitol, and came nigh to compass the making of a president, but the genius of Political Organization working through them. It is organization that enables politicians, like bands of robber knights high seated on the Rhine, to dominate the vicinage and levy tribute on all that passes by. Neither personal nor patriotic ambition can afford to quarrel with it. To neglect the Caucus, not to seek a seat in the Convention, or to disregard the calls of the Committee, is to be a cypher in politics. Except as they wait on this, genius, experience and devotion are of poor account in public affairs.

Holding all the approaches of power, Political Organization is able also to control public policy in a large degree. Not much that is important is written in the statute book except by its consent, or even at its inspiration. Individual device and the impulse of the age alike wait on its favor. The legislature is its secretary, the executive its messenger, and the judiciary not seldom watches its nod. Meanwhile an innocent and helpless people inscribe their banners with its delusive watchwords, and marshal themselves this side and that at its command.

The theory of our system is that the people themselves choose their rulers at the polls, but the fact is that the Political Organizers who make nominations at the Caucus and the Convention do it. To us is left but one better than Hobson's choice: he could have this or none, while we can take the candidate of one party or the other, each of them most often equally unworthy.

The web of Political Organization is now spread so wide and so fine that not the smallest constituency escapes it. The business of towns is brought by its influence within the range of the federal maelstrom, and sucked down often to serious disaster.

At arms against the rest of the world, these combinations of Politicians are privately in league with each other, resisting in concert "stump" candidates, "citizens" tickets, public opinion, and the scrutiny of the law.

As creeping vines in tropic forests absorb the juices and crush the stems of nobler growths, so has Political Organization squeezed out the life of democracy in this country till nothing is left but crumbling fibre or an empty shell. Like some parasites, too, the thing so imitates the hues of what it feeds on as to be taken to belong to it. To illustrate this point a single instance will suffice. The federal constitution contains no more plausible or approved device than the State Colleges of Presidential Electors. Designed in part to crystallize the amorphous, and point the indefinite in public opinion on the larger topics of politics, its main intent was to commit the choice of the federal executive to bodies selected by the people in each State for their high intelligence and integrity; and so to shape the business that illegitimate preparation of every sort should be eliminated from this critical node in the career of the Republic. But how has that purpose now failed! The people have absolutely nothing to do with the selection of Presidential Electors. The polls but serve to register the edicts of Political Organization.

Alarmed democracy, in legislatures and constitutional conventions, has tried many various devices, such as minority representation, short terms of office, mixed commissions and the like, to impede the sway of this encroaching power, but all in vain. Reform must take a deeper hold.

Political Organization necessarily Self-seeking.

The Caucus and Convention, as has been already pointed out, were of virtuous parentage, and their early history accordingly presents nothing discreditable. It is the unanimous testimony of men who were engaged in politics thirty or forty years ago, that these bodies were then honestly constituted, organized and conducted, and that the nominations that they made were a substantial expression of the general will. But now, from a spontaneous impulse and arrangement of democracy, Political Organization has become little more than a Conspiracy of Self-seekers.

This disastrous and foreboding change is not difficult to account for. As time went on it was found that the gathering of the Caucus and Convention, and the making party organization continuous from year to year, through the Committee, and effective at the polls, necessarily involved the expenditure of much money, time and toil. What with the hire of a polling place for the Caucus, a hall for the Convention and headquarter-rooms for the Committee; the cost of the printing and distribution of tickets, circulars, and other advertising; of watchmen and attorneys to guard and further party interests at the polls; of messengers and livery to bring laggards along, and a thousand other necessities, the mere money expenditures of the conductors of a political campaign in any large constituency are of great magnitude. In a presidential contest they count up among the millions. The personal attention, industry and skill involved are of corresponding proportions.

Now, it is not in average human nature to toil or spend in any cause without the reasonable prospect of a *quid pro quo*. But no such inducement to take a busy and expensive part in the conduct of politics reaches the average citizen, unless in some rare emergency. Who will spend fifty dollars to save ten? The principal interest that the voter ordinarily feels, or has, in the public business, is to save something in taxes; but to try to make that saving by going into politics would be, he knows, to save at the spigot and waste at the bung-hole. It would necessarily cost him ten times his stake, with the chances ten to one that he would be cast after all. Neither because he thinks that the education of his children in the public schools is badly managed, or that the alderman, or Congressman that represents him is incapable, or that any other such evil is going on, will he wish, or can he afford, to incur the expense, fatigue and harassment of traversing his county, ward or district, to awaken, instruct and incite public opinion, and to gather the Caucus and arrange the Convention for the selection of better nominees. The busy man cannot allow the time, the lazy man the industry, the poor man the money, nor the rich man the trouble: nor will the wise man, of whichsoever of these kinds, be quick to undertake the difficult and thankless task. In the same regard, the honest man cannot be expected to take as much pains to guard the public cash box as the burglar will to break into it, nor folks of sense to be as bent on keeping an ass out of the legislature as that persevering creature often is to get there.

In a word, it is only the man who looks to being made sheriff, treasurer, congressman or collector, either now or by and by, to furnishing public supplies from his store, or getting public deposits for his bank, to having his son made a policeman, a cadet or a deputy, or to some other of the innumerable advantages that attend political control, who has sufficient inducement to undergo the toil and meet the costs of Political Organization.

Here the greediness and venality of so many of our public men find, not only explanation, but some excuse. The ballot box in large constituencies utterly fails to bestow authority on the people, and leaves it to the laborious and costly rivalry of Politicians. Surely it is not strange that they who have toiled and spent should deem themselves entitled to profit and enjoy. Thus the unseemly "salary grab" was in fact entirely congruous with the situation.

Add, that what is nobody's business is anybody's, and we have a full explanation of how Political Organization is now totally in the hands of Self-seekers.

The Impotence of the People at Large

corresponds with the might of Political Organization. Not more subdued to a greedy priesthood was the church of England in Wyckliff's time than is democracy now in this republic to combinations of designing Politicians. There is almost an absolute disconnection between the public will and public function. We are not the willing architects of our own misfortunes. That cabinets are unskilled, city councils corrupt and legislatures ignorant, is no impeachment of democracy, for the people have nothing to do with selecting them. Surely it is not by popular contrivance or design that the charge of the commonwealth has now become the wage of rival gangs of unscrupulous Politicians.

All the struggles that from time to time the people make to escape from this thraldom are but like the vain, pitiful wriggling of worms beneath a giant's tread; and this for the following reasons:

(1.) No campaign can be carried on under our present system of politics in any large constituency, as already explained, without the expenditure of much time, money and endeavor. The mere getting up of a ticket of candidates, putting it before the people, explaining its intent, defending it against wrong assault, and promoting it at the polls, is a costly and arduous job. In doing such work the collections of politicians are stimulated and aided by the plenitude of the public purse, *in esse* or *in posse*, by the vigor of office and contract seeking, and by all the other sinister ambitions that look to politics for help; while scattered patriotism has nothing to depend on but confused general purpose, hesitating efforts, and scanty and uncertain material aid.

(2.) The general will can be of but little avail against the existing powers of politics until it shall possess itself of the slow grown and wide reaching faculties which they enjoy. Impulse can never compete with system in the long run, individuality with co-operation, nor youth with inveteracy. No[illegible]ill the loose purposes and undertakings of the people are somehow grown together, as those of politicians now are, can they act for themselves. If everybody should go to the Caucus, as we are so loudly exhorted to do, the action of that body, as it is now shaped, would still obey the concert of self-seeking politicians.

(3.) They who from patriotic motives may undertake to break our bondage to Party Organizers, must constantly lack the wide personal acquaintance, the intimacy with popular opinions and prejudices, and the practice of management, with its resulting skill, that they acquire who make politics their business. This is why a few years ago an assembly of the best citizens of Chicago, spurred to great effort by the unexampled calamity of her conflagration, found themselves utterly incapable of getting up a "citizens" ticket for municipal officers to help meet the emergency, that would have any chance of success, till they called to their aid the skill of leading politicians in the two parties, and made nominations in accordance with their suggestions.

(4.) Finally, the people can seldom be sure that a so-called "tax-payer's," "no-party," or "citizens'" ticket is any better than the rest. Not all of them who cry "Reform! Reform!" are really Reformers,—as the famous "Committee of Seventy" had reason to know when they found their own ranks infested with the very sort of vermin of which they were trying to rid the administration of the city. It is notorious that more often than otherwise such undertakings are engineered by office-seekers, turn-coats and traders in politics.

Abstention of the People from Politics.

Their impotence thus becoming apparent, the great body of citizens, especially of the better sort, now seldom attend Caucuses, leaving them to the charge of rival office-seekers and their friends, and office holders, and dependents. Says the Chicago Tribune: "At the primary meetings this year (1874) to select delegates to nominate candidates for Congress, county officers and members of the State legislature, not more than six thousand votes were polled"—this in a city of at least sixty thousand lawful voters—"and of these one-half were confessedly repeaters and fraudulent, many notoriously doing service for both parties." "There is a force in this city of about two thousand men," says the same paper, "who are professional attendants at primaries, and who are hired regularly every year to nominate certain candidates." This is but a fair sample of what obtains in every other city.

The polls too are getting to be deserted, except on great party occasions where Political Organization presides. Not more than one in ten of the voters of Oswego takes part in the election of school commissioners. Amendments of the charter of that city that were deemed by the State legislature of importance enough to be submitted to the vote of the people at a special poll got even less attention,—and that almost alone from those who had a special interest in the matter and from their personal friends. It is a good deal for the same reason that important changes in State constitutions often call out, notoriously, but a meagre vote. Tired out by Politicians, we sometimes seem to be approaching the despairing apathy of the neighboring Mexican republic, where, often, it is said, in a city of twenty thousand population not a hundred come to the polls; or the indifference of new-enfranchised and untaught Italy, where not a twentieth part of the lawful voters seem to care what is going on. It sometimes looks as though popular sentiment in the matter of politics were becoming perished and insensible, like a palsied member. We seem hardly to try to get release from our present bondage. We constantly throw up our hats for candidates whose unfitness for public duty is as clear to unblunted sight as the noon day sun. It is astonishing what poor statesmanship and questionable virtue seem to please us. We are satisfied with half a man. If a high officer of finance appear to be honest, no matter if he be a fool; or if a congressman be smart, no matter if he be also a knave.

Under these circumstances it is not strange that

The Best Class of Men are Fast Disappearing from Public Life.

There is no municipal council or State legislature that is composed of the most able and respected citizens. Scant, surely, is now the supply of statesmen at either end of Pennsylvania Avenue. A foggy nebula has supplanted those bright stars which at the beginning of this generation sprinkled thick the political sky, and rained influence on all the nation. Hardly is there now a man in public life who, by eloquence, knowledge, expertness or force, has brought to the help or decoration of our politics aught that will save him from quick oblivion when his term of office shall be spent, or some momentary party controversy go by, or to whom public opinion can look for guidance, or the public welfare for strong advancement. In the scales of the Political Organizer that now determine who shall fill every public place, nothing but popular availability, the claims of party service, and the favor of official power has much weight. Poised against these, character, intelligence and integrity kick high the beam. For nigh fifty years under his rule we have constantly seen solid public opinion and the aspirations of native greatness alike have less and less to do with the occupancy of high station and the conduct of high duties. Patriotism has been crowded away by self-seeking, honor by sordidness, and statesmanship by intrigue and activity. Positions of the highest trust and distinction, such as should crown a lifetime of noble endeavor, have become the prize of cunning and impudence. Fitness is now no qualification for public place, but rather a disqualification. "I was thought of," says Figaro, "for a government appointment; but, unfortunately, I was fit for it; an arithmetician was wanted, a dancer got it." The story of political preferment in this country at the present time could hardly be better told.

The means and methods by which almost alone public station can now be attained to are repulsive to high minded men. Self-respect hesitates to descend to the companionship of the Caucus and the Convention; integrity scorns their devious courses, and independence refuses their slavish environment. Nor is political elevation any longer august, or capable of giving much satisfaction to a worthy ambition. If a man of qualifications arrive at a seat in some public body, he finds himself out of place in the midst of surrounding stolidity, sloth and fraudulence. His capacity is unappreciated and his ideas of duty laughed at. The jealousy of meaner minds, hoodwinked partisanship, the marauders and free-booters of politics, and the enterprise of a venal or sensational press, constantly assault him; and, though he may not quail before their attacks, he will hardly seek intercourse or conflict with them again.

Thus it is that while in our early history the most worthy and distinguished citizens were proud to take a seat in the common council or the State legislature, they are now near all desirous to escape it. The fittest men seldom want to be either mayor or governor. Even cabinet offices in the federal government are often refused by the people best qualified to fill them. And yet no other occupation is so worthy of the desire or employ of exalted natures, or naturally so attractive to them, as the management and instruction of civil society. But not till a better class of opportunities and attractions than what they now have is furnished to them will they undertake the business.

Whatever talent arrives at public station is principally devoted, out of the strong demands of both gratitude and prudence, to the support of Political Organization. The creation of this power, the public man is also its creature. His first allegiance he feels to be due to the men that nominated him, his second to the party that supported him, and his last to the general interest or his conscience; and he governs his conduct accordingly. To repay to Politicians what he owes them, to take care of himself by taking care of his friends, to defend the administration or to discredit it, according to his party side, and to watch the gales of popular opinion, however ephemeral or unhealthy, are now the chief endeavor and occupation of public men, to near the utter neglect of painstaking study of the common welfare.

Out of this it comes that we so constantly have

Little Men in Big Places.

A pest of pettiness, banded together in Political Organization have now nigh driven out all high qualities from public life—as in South Africa, it is said, swarms of noisome insects render wide regions uninhabitable by man. DeTocqueville told us that our system "tends to level down." Said Carlyle lately to an American visitor: "Yours is the only country in the world that is not ruled by its best citizens." Says one who has been called the Boanerges of newspaper reporters and the Tacitus of our cotemporary annals: "The public business at Washington is ruled by the meanest and littlest of men." Not far out of the way are these observations. When you consider the importance and difficulty of their duties, I know nothing more incongruous than the narrow calibre, the scanty accomplishments and the groveling aims of the great majority of our public functionaries. It would be difficult to find a community of forty thousand people anywhere in the nation that could not supply a better cabinet to advise the President about the concerns of over forty millions of us than Washington has seen collected in the last dozen years.

The very style of the great majority of public documents, let alone their logic, is enough to condemn their authors, as it were out of their own mouths; for there is great truth in the saying that "the style is the man." The wandering pen evinces the chaotic mind.

Young Men our Rulers.

Another evil result of the present state of politics is the commitment of the public business largely to youngsters. Grey heads are rare in our councils, and the terms "alderman" and "senator" have lost their native significance. The average age of the members of the State legislature from New York city in 1874, was reported to be less than thirty-four years. Even upon the judicial bench we constantly see men who have to learn their business as they go along, like a shifty pedagogue. Great change is there in this respect since Henry Clay, fifty years ago, was seriously objected to as a candidate for the presidency, and perhaps defeated, because he was but forty-seven years old,—no so young a man by a whole lustrum of the ripening years of life having ever been raised to that august station. This change has occurred partly because sage experience abstains with disgust from our present politics, partly because slow-growing character has no longer much foothold in that tumultuous arena, but chiefly because youth especially abounds in the stir and impudence that are essential to success under the rule of Political Organization. Thus has the staid wisdom of age been supplanted by the giddiness of youth. But still the change, it must be allowed, is not much inconsistent, in the present conduct of politics, with the ancient maxim: "old men for counsel and young men for war," for our democracy is now far more a warfare than a council.

This promotion of juvenility flatters Young America and aids that changeableness in policy which narrow vision takes for progress; but it is none the less of evil omen, as at war alike with the general phenomena of nature, the lessons of history and the conclusions of reason. Surely a man knows more at fifty or sixty years old than at thirty. If you had known twenty years ago what you have learned since, you might be worth a million. Rapid as may be the movement of the age, it does not outstrip the capacity of the individual mind to keep up with it. The occasional monstrosities of youthful genius in war, eloquence or poetry, like Charles the Twelfth, Patrick Henry, or Byron, are no argument against my proposition. Where history shows one Pitt prime minister of a wise nation at twenty-five, it records a score of Palmerstons whose great abilities lacked ripeness until the grand climacteric of life. The period of three score years and ten is often looked on as a sign of imbecility, but ~~there~~ are many times more imbeciles at thirty years of age: for native vigor is long-lived. Add to this argument that, however great the qualifications of a man may be, it is impossible that they should become generally known to a large community till after he had been many years on the public stage.

The report of a recent committee of Congress (1873?) on Civil Service Reform strikingly sets forth a number of the evils of our politics, and deserves to be quoted here; although its authors failed to reach the bottom of the difficulty, attributing nigh all that we suffer to rotation in office, which is in fact but one of the fruits of the Organization of Politicians.

They say: "The whole machinery of government is pulled to pieces every four years. Political caucuses, primary meetings and conventions are controlled by the promise and expectation of patronage. Political candidates for the lowest and highest positions are directly or indirectly pledged. The pledge is the price of the nomination, and when the election is determined pledges must be redeemed. The business of the Nation, the legislation of Congress, the duties of the departments, are all subordinated to the distribution of what is called the 'spoils.' No one escapes. President, Secretaries, Representatives, are pertinaciously dogged and besought on the one hand to appoint, on the other to retain, subordinates. The great officers of the Government are constrained to become mere office-brokers. Meantime they have their hopes, ambitions and designs. They may strive to make their patronage secure their private aims. The spectacle is as familiar as it is painful and humiliating. We accuse no individual. We appeal only to universal and deplorable experience.

"The influence of this system upon those who hold office may be inferred. Officers appointed chiefly as a reward for personal and party service and not upon proof of fitness, who know that there is no certain promotion for merit, and that they hold their places only until others with more influential friends can thrust them out, can have neither pride nor hope in the fulfilment of their duties. * * Taught by the system to regard the office as a prize, and warned by the same system that their tenure is neither character nor fitness, they are sorely tempted to make the most of it in the shortest time, both to repay the trouble and expense of procuring it, and to provide against an early removal. Meanwhile, as a part of the vast scheme of patronage, an officer who is appointed solely in reference to political pressure is judged not by the manner in which he does his duty, but by the zeal with which he serves the influence that secured his place. * * *

"When public offices are regarded only as rewards for political service, they will be constantly multiplied to supply more places. There will be incessant temporary employments, as they are called, and consequent deficiency bills, and supplementary appropriation bills. Meanwhile, the influence which has obtained the office, not for the public service, but as a private reward, will be slow to see the inefficiency or actual dishonesty in the conduct of the incumbent. * * *

"But when the application is urged upon the Executive Department by a member of the Legislative branch of the Government, the mischief becomes intolerable. It is often by the power of patronage that a Representative is chiefly known to what are called the active politicians among his constituents. He is held to be their agent and broker of offices. They have done his work and he must do theirs, and his position often depends upon his fulfilment of pledges. When, therefore, he applies to the appointing power, there is a kind of urgency which it is hard to resist. It is not a favor only that he asks,—it is the means of fulfilling a bargain. The place is demanded in the name of the party. Yet, granting the favor is not necessarily a benefit to the party; it is often a profit to one man only and his followers."

Other evil influences of Political Organization.

The bad effects of the present false construction of democracy are by no means limited to the public business, but extend to every feature of our condition. The Caucus and Convention now hold the middle ground where government meets the people, and authority its subjects. They form a connecting link, a door of passage to and fro, an intermediate broker, a re-agent of double determination, a mordant that fixes the color of democracy as well on the under as on the upper side. If their work be evil, society can but suffer in every nerve.

It is chiefly by the influence of Politicians, who in effect form the constituency of Political Organization; that *party spirit*,—chief bane of free government from time immemorial,—is kept alive among the people, after all reason for it has ceased. They will not let by-gones be by-gones. They rub our ears and set us on. At every election they blow hot the dying embers of religious strife, and stir the competition of localities, the prejudices of race, and every other element of civil discord. It is to their pretended sympathy with the side of the most numerous voters that has been chiefly due the conflict between labor and capital that so constantly scars our industry and brings women and children to want. A satisfactory settlement of the important social question about the sale of intoxicating drinks has little other hindrance than the interested interference of Politicians. They pat the grey mare, seductively. They get between the impulse and the goal of charity, and prostitute it on the way. Education, enterprise, agriculture, commerce and every mechanic and æsthetic art are constantly brought more or less to harm by their operations. There is, in short, no concern or affection of the people that Politicians do not now make use of, to its own great detriment, to advance their ambition and gratify their greed.

A striking example of the wide disastrous influences of our politics has been lately visible to the instructed eye in the calamity that in the autumn of 1873 overtook alike the capital and the labor of the country, the one losing its accumulations and the other its employment. That whole trouble had its immediate cause in the collapse of railroad enterprise; and that collapsed because it had been blown up to unnatural proportions by Federal subsidies, State guarantees, the permission to the people to vote themselves a railroad, and other follies, crudities and iniquities of legislation on the subject—of all of which Organizations of Politicians by universal consent have been the prime promoters. At the beginning of that year we were building at the rate of about fifteen thousand miles of railroad per annum; and Wall Street was flourishing along twice as many more completed miles that hardly earned half their expenses. On this depended for employment, directly and indirectly, above a million pairs of hands, and for support at least three times as many more, and, for rent, no end of capital. All at once, swelled beyond the strain that the material could endure, the balloon suffered a rent and dragged on the ground, throwing out the multitude of capitalists and laborers that had occupied its basket, bringing disaster upon all surrounding and dependent industries, and sending a wave of poverty over the whole country. Any other account of that crisis than this, whoever offers it, is shallow at the best.

The influence of politics is as pervading as the universal air. It taints or sweetens, revives or mortifies, all that it breathes upon. Whatever is false in government spreads disaster among all the concerns of society, working loss, wrong, ill example and discouragement, and hindering spontaneous adjustment and healthy evolution.

The present debauchment of public life has begun to hurt the morals of the people themselves. Nor could it be otherwise. Great is the power of example. We reform others, it has been well said, when we ourselves walk uprightly. Government is a city set on a hill. It is the cynosure of all the country round. Its rays of influence reach to the utmost circumference of society, and penetrate its narrowest corners. In democracies, as in kingdoms, the practices of rulers are a fireside theme, and a justification. There is a fashion in morals and opinions, as well as in dress, that takes its cue from headquarters: and, accordingly, in this country the tone of virtue in Capitols and City Halls threatens to become its tone in private life. Propriety and dignity are abashed when indecency and vulgarity sit in high places. When self-seeking is rewarded in public life, when honesty proves not to be the path of policy, and when honor loses preferment, a great incitement to virtue is taken away, and a stimulus to unworthy ambition added. When presidents, vice presidents, governors, mayors, the speakers of great legislatures, and other high public functionaries, are constantly convicted of crime, indirection or disingenuousness, where shall the people be taught virtue and good faith? If the custom prevails to make as much as possible, *per fas aut ne fas*, out of the public, why not make it out of our neighbors? When knavery in the Caucus and the Convention has such good reward, why not try it in private business? I know not how the spirit of evil can find more encouragement than when election frauds are rewarded, as they are now, by political success; when the endeavors of Christian charity, in hospital and poor-house, are turned to the profit of Politicians, or even made arenas of inhumanity and sensualism; or when, so often, in our police, the officers of the law share in the gains of them who violate the law.

There is no avocation that is not stained by the touch of Political Organization. The Bar of New York City was lately forced to try to gather its respectability to one side in order to escape the inculpation of general brotherhood in political crime. Another learned profession has been taught to seek such important and honorable public places as that of health officer, commissioner of lunacy, coroner and the like, not by devotion to science or humanity, but by party activity and the cultivation of political influence. Even the pulpit turns from the chastisement of the pride that sits before it, canopied with pagan magnificence, to comment on politics, and to flatter its constituency by the attribution of especial patriotism. The pen is debauched when it so often finds support in helping Organizations of unworthy Politicians. So, every other form of science or skill gets a set back when the public honors and employment that belong to merit are bestowed on political pets, and when humbugs in education, agriculture and the fine arts have the approval and aid of capitols. Even our army and navy, of old the peculiar home of strong integrity, have begun to feel the corrupt and enervating influence of our false politics. Already are their rosters thick-set with sycophants and sinecurists. Preferment goes no longer by merit or gradation, but by political favor. Poor school of honor surely is there now at navy yards, arsenals, Indian agencies, or any other of the stations where official example is set to the defenders of the country. In short, there is no form of opinion or occupation where the dishonesty of our politics has not grafted its evil scions, and brings not forth already its bitter fruit.

Wrongs to the Weak and Young.

Two phenomena of peculiar painfulness and peril that mark our present career are worthy of special mention here in justification of my complaint.

Pitiful for humanity to witness, and surely most dangerous to the Republic, is the way that the ignorant, the foolish and the poor, who forever constitute so large a share of mankind, and who in great affairs are the proper wards and pupils of superior natures, are misled, defrauded and corrupted at the Caucus and the polls by Politicians, and taught to believe that there is no such virtue as public honesty.

But of still worse omen are the lessons that are sown by the same hand in the quick minds of youth. The present is the nursery of the future. The customs of the day are the school of the rising generation, and its successful men their examples. All the fashions of our politics tend strongly to their debauchment. Already we see no end of young men seduced from the paths of steady industry and decent ambition into an idle and unworthy waiting on the favor of parties and Politicians.

If in these things the commonwealth incur no danger, then surely it need never be alarmed; and if the spirit of civilization, progress, humanity, or whatever other high expectation or sentiment is extant, have here no accusation to make, then let them be forever silent.

Falstaff mustering his Recruits.

Shakespeare pictured the universal. The Politician belongs to no age or country, but always and everywhere stands ready to seize upon the rule that society thus far has left open to his greedy approach. Before me hangs an engraving of a painting by Schroedter of "Falstaff mustering his recruits," (King Henry IV, part 2d, act 3d, scene 2d,) which a few years ago was so widely circulated by the Cosmopolitan Art Association as to be known to a good many of my readers, and which wonderfully illustrates the situation and spirit of politics at the present time. In the face and attitude of Falstaff himself are depicted the unscrupulousness, arrogance, cunning and shameless greed that generally belong to the Knights of Political Organization in this country now. Before him attend the helpless and frightened people, mixed with his esquires, making trade of their prestige and opportunities. At his right hand appears the obsequious visage of the inferior office-holder, and at his left—worst feature of all—the page and pupil of our politics, idly toying at first glance, but, on second, fully watchful of the situation,—as though looking out for an inspectorship of the customs or of elections, or the clerkship of some legislative committee.

Prospective Growth of the Rule of Political Organization.

This injurious mastery of bands of self-seekers over the commonwealth is not a momentary cloud darkening the political sky, nor any chance morbidity that the healing virtue of nature may be expected to purge away in due time; neither is it some imported evil germ, like communism, which the superior intelligence of the American people may safely be trusted to suppress: it is rooted in our present political life deeper than scrofula in the human body. Some transient weakening and local break-down it may suffer, names and platforms will change from time to time, and new hands in their generation gather the reins of power, but its general sway in spirit and in force can but steadily augment. Like the young behemoth that it is, whatever surface bruises it may suffer, its deeper thews will still expand, its joints gather oil, and its brawn resistance. After all the innumerable recent investigations and impeachments by congress and State legislatures, the corrections of courts and the anxious endeavors of the people, it is difficult to see where political vice is any more than scotched at the best. Surely, if there be anything that promises to strengthen in the future, it is the Organization of self-seeking Politicians under our present system of pretended democracy. What adversary shall challenge it? or for whom shall it step aside? We have to help resist it no artificial influence or ancient authority, such as a standing army, a state religion, the compact corporation of land owners that primogeniture keeps up, or the inherited station of monarch or oligarch. Will the people come to their own rescue, or can they? It might seem to promise something in this latter behalf when a thousand voting tax-payers assemble, as they did at Fort Wayne, Ind., on the 10th of August, 1873, to join in protest against existing Rings of Politicians, and the unlawful and grievous burdens that they had imposed upon the people: but what can such conglomerations of democracy do beyond protesting? Absolutely nothing. All such popular up-risings and vociferations are as weak against the strong-seated power of Political Organization as the tumultuous waves that bark at the rock of Gibraltar. The very security of this potentate is the Sahara of democratic power in the midst of which it stands,—as often times surrounding barrenness and desolation guarded the ancient cities of the East. Not till the situation where it has its origin is changed, will Political Organization cease to spread itself.

The Prospect of our Politics not bright.

The future can be best argued from the past, our destiny from our tendency. If for half a century our system of political construction has behaved worse and worse, what will it be doing a half a century hence? As no citizen of New York forty years ago would have dreamed of the profligacy, incompetency and neglectfulness by which its late legislatures have been characterized, so the near future may have in store for us such public wrongs and follies as will make this base period appear to our children as pure and golden as do to us the days of Clinton and Tompkins, or of Silas Wright, Michael Hoffman, Abijah Mann, and Azariah C. Flagg. When speculating bankers rule the treasury and make merchandise of the national honor, when law-makers, greedy or aghast, run to and fro between railroad corporations and granges for money or instruction, when a single city is robbed by a Ring of Politicians of forty-five millions of money in three years, and when election frauds have repeatedly set States and the nation itself on the edge of civil war, what is there that we may not fear? If Political Organization do such things in the green, what will it not do in ripened hardihood? The way it looks, the day is not far distant when the judge will be as dependent for his situation on the help of Politicians as is now the janitor of his court room, and when his solemn office will be as regularly traded for as is now a shrievalty or a county clerkship.

Youthful ingenuousness, bookish theory and patriotic confidence expect to see a change for the better, if not in this campaign at least in the next, and every now and then gather courage from the sight of some narrow and momentary eddy which they take for a settled alteration in the main stream. But no such comfort does old experience or deep philosophy discover. At the rate we are going down it will not take us long to reach the very nadir of political profligacy and folly. Said Kossuth, who was as clear and capable an observer of public affairs as this century has produced, after making us a visit: "If you do not get rid of your Politicians your country will be lost within fifty years." Only ten years after that prediction these Politicians plunged us into an internecine war, from which the nation with difficulty escaped alive. A quarter of a century still remains for the fulfilment of his prophecy; and who shall say that it will not be fulfilled?

But, notwithstanding this severe incrimination of them, I not only admit, but most earnestly claim,—and let not this claim be forgotten,—that, under our present system of elections, these

Political Organizations are a Necessity and a Benefit.

Were this improvisation of democratic power suddenly to give out, our condition would be as much worse than it is now as anarchy is worse than despotism. Naught but its interference saves the commonwealth in large constituencies from constant casualty and utter chaos. Without the help of "working" Politicians to gather and organize popular opinion and set up candidates, our votes for governor, mayor, member of congress, county officers and the like, would inevitably be scattered all about, and not even a decent plurality of voices, much less a majority, would ever chime. On the contrary, the apostle of some transient, narrow and undeserving notion, like know-nothingism, labor reform or woman's rights, which popular enthusiasm or alarm had suddenly lifted up; the mere demagogue of the press, the pulpit or the stump; or the attorney of some strong moneyed corporation, would attain to power, while the mass of public opinion and interest, lacking cohesion, impulse and even self-consciousness, would remain unrepresented and unprotected.

In short, we are doing the best that is possible under our present system of elections. In the nature of the case, the virtual selection of public functionaries in constituencies too large for all the voters to assemble must devolve on a small delegated fraction of the mass of the people. Thus it was that in Chicago, after its frightful fire, and in New York, a year or two before, when something nigh as terrible came to light in the exposure of a gang of municipal thieves, general anxiety and opinion found no way to exert themselves, until to a committee constituting less than one-thousandth part of the voting population the whole selection of candidates was virtually given. How necessary is the present machinery of Political Organization to democratic effort may also be seen in the fact that every popular movement, whether for temperance, against railroads, or in any other direction, constantly employs its very methods and instruments,—Caucus, Convention, Committee, Platform and all.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW SYSTEM OF ELECTIONS.

(NOVA INSTAURATIO REIPUBLICÆ.)

HAVING thus indicated the unsatisfactoriness of our present political state, having shown the utter insufficiency of the chief suggestions that have been heretofore made toward either its explanation or its cure, and having pretended to trace it to its original source, it remains for me to offer a logical, practicable and effective remedy, without doing which complaint and criticism are but a cheap occupation.

If I have been right in laying the trouble to our election system, its remedy must obviously be sought for in an amendment of that system. Nor should the search seem hopeless, since difficulties of artificial origin ought not be beyond the reach of art to overcome. Whatever evils law has caused, surely law can cure.

Let the substance of my argument be briefly stated afresh: Noticing that, almost universally, the present prevailing method of establishing public authority by direct popular vote works well in small constituencies and ill in large, I attribute its failure in the latter class of cases to three circumstances; viz: (1) to the actual and necessary ignorance of the great majority of voters both as to whom they are voting for and what they are voting about; (2) to their utter inability to unite, of and among themselves, upon representative candidates for office, and (3) to Political Organization, which, started to help the people in this embarrassment, has, by the logic of the situation, become their corrupt and corrupting master.

Now, to correct these false features, it is plainly necessary somehow (1) to bring the business of the voter within the limits of his probable acquaintance with the man he votes for,

(2) of his substantial comprehension of the duties that his candidate, if elected, will have to discharge, and (3) of his practical ability to unite with his fellows at the polls in the pursuit of a common object, without calling the agency of Politicians to his help. These changes, and nothing less, will clear away the three fallacies of our present method of elections, and set democracy on the solid ground of truth and reason.

But these objects are obviously impossible to be accomplished under the present plan of the direct election of the functionaries of large constituencies by the people themselves. It would surely be unprofitable for each neighborhood to send a representative to Congress or the State legislature. It would make these bodies inconveniently numerous, if nothing worse. Neither can the mass of us by any means be brought to understand the difficult questions that the high officers of political society are constantly called on to decide. Equally impracticable is it for the majority of the people, or indeed any considerable portion of them, in Philadelphia or Iowa, Rhode Island or Atlanta, spontaneously to unite on a candidate for mayor or governor, and combine their endeavors for his support.

By what device then, in this extremity, shall the present false relation of the voter to public authority in large constituencies be so modified as to give him his proper share in the management of the commonwealth?

There is but one resort. *Fas est ab hoste doceri.* We must take a lesson from Politicians themselves. We can break down the rule of Political Organization only by adopting its methods. Our whole political life now hinges upon an instrumentality that is unknown to written constitutions, because that instrumentality is one of nature's autochthons, against which all artifice is vain. It is the Caucus-chosen delegates, assembled in Convention, that now, in effect, appoint all our higher functionaries. We must make this Mayor of the Palace king. The people must turn over the prerogative of choosing governors and legislators, now nominally exercised at the ballot box, to Representative Delegates. In the business of all large constituencies the Caucus and Convention must be substituted for the Polls. Thus only can the function of the voter be accommodated to his intelligence; and thus only, the shadow of power discarded, can he secure its substance.

Only a single accessory contrivance is needed. The popular constituency must be marked out in a better way than it is now. The present fixed geographical boundaries of election districts are a great and necessary help to the engineer of our present politics. They serve him as a map, and their poll-lists, registry and returns are his tables of calculation. By these he fixes his work, distributes his forces, "lays his pipe," and "rolls his logs." This facility he must somehow be deprived of, or else he will still stake out our fortune.

—Without farther preface I proceed to set forth a new Election System; which, it is believed, will remedy the defects of the present, make democracy a reality where it is now but a name, and convert to success its ancient failure.

A.—The Popular Constituency.

(1.) In every town, ward or other civil division that exceeds, say, two thousand in population, let the registered voters be divided by lot into five, nine or other odd number of equal sections or squads, after the following manner: Let all the names, each on a separate slip of paper, be put in a panel, and publicly drawn one by one, as the names of jurors are now drawn, by the town clerk, alderman or other suitable officer of the precinct, till the panel is cleared: and, as they are drawn, let them be distributed into separate lists, A, B, C, and so forth. *Each of these lists shall constitute a Primary Electoral Constituency.*

The expedient number of these sections will depend on the populousness of the ward or town that is thus divided up. In a large town it would generally be from five to nine, and in some swarming city ward perhaps two or three times as great. The essential point is, that this Constituency, when assembled together, should not be too large for orderly consultation. "Any assembly," says the philosophic Hildreth, "which consists of more than three or four hundred, loses the power of deliberation, and degenerates into a mere mob, in which the conception of the moment becomes contagious and omnipotent, and everything is carried by the noisiest and the most violent." Jefferson, in the same view, desired to lay out Virginia into election districts of not more than five hundred people each.

(2.) Let each of these Constituencies be called together as soon as convenient, but not necessarily on the same day, by personal notice through the mail or otherwise, by posting or newspaper publication, or in more than one of these ways, and let it, retired by itself, proceed to choose an Elector to Represent it in the further establishment of authority.

(3.) Let this meeting be presided over by the alderman, supervisor or other fit officer of the precinct until a moderator is chosen from among its own members. Organization completed by the appointment of a clerk, let the roll of members be called, and let each man in his turn vote for such Representative, either *viva voce* or by ballot as he may prefer,—though the secrecy of the ballot would no doubt soon be discarded, as a resort unworthy of freemen.

(4.) In the choice of a Representative Elector this Constituency should not be limited to the list of its own members, but should have the range of the whole body of voters in the town, ward or borough of which it might form a part. This is entirely consistent with the democratic principle, and would be much in aid of freedom, harmony and the best advice.

(5.) Neither, for like reasons, should it be forbidden that more than one of these Constituencies should choose the same man,—each Elector of course having weight in his place in proportion to the number of Constituencies that he may appear for.

(6.) The citizen should be forbidden, under pain of future disfranchisement, to refuse the Electoral office, unless in some prescribed way he had previously advised the precinct of his unwillingness to serve it in that capacity.

(7.) This establishment of the Primary Constituency by lot, and its assemblage for the choice of a Representative Elector is to be repeated at stated intervals,—every year or two at first perhaps, though when the system is well at work, and its fruits have begun to ripen, once in four or six years will undoubtedly be often enough.

(8.) In the registry of voters for this fresh allotment let only those names be put down that voted at the last election, and those who may make personal application for the privilege with due evidence of a right to it. The citizen who should forget, or remain unacquainted with such a regulation, or think it gave him too much trouble, had better be left off the roster of democracy altogether.

(9.) To this choice of a Representative Elector let all popular suffrage be limited;—except in the case of towns or other civil divisions of such small population that their voters, assembled in mass, can hold true conference. These shall continue to choose local officers as they do now.

(10.) But let them, when assembled for that purpose, also each choose a Representative Elector to act for it in the wider spheres of democratic rule.

B.—Electoral Colleges.

(1.) Let the delegates so chosen in any town or ward constitute a College of Electors for it; and let them, assembled at a day appointed, in open session and *viva voce*, elect all the prime functionaries of the precinct;—clerks and other subordinate functionaries being left in all cases to be appointed and removed by those who are responsible for their conduct.

(2.) Let these Primary Colleges also choose one or more Electors to represent them, and the people for whom they act, in a higher rank of Colleges, for the appointment of mayors, county officers, members of the State legislature and the House of Representatives. The body of this second class of Electors so chosen in any county shall constitute the county College; in a city, the city College; in an Assembly district, the Assembly College; and so on.

(3.) In like manner let this Secondary College in each Assembly district appoint one delegate or more to represent it in an Electoral College of a still higher grade for the choice of governor and other State officers, the high judiciary, federal senators and Presidential Electors.

(4.) This last class of delegates, the Presidential Electors, should meet in general assembly of the whole Union, as do delegates to party Presidential Conventions, and not, as now, in disconnected groups. If, in this regard, the method of the Constitution had not already in effect been superseded by the method of Political Organization, the election of the Federal executive would constantly go to the House of Representatives, begetting repeated demoralization and danger.

(5.) In each College the vote of an Elector should have weight as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of people that he might represent.

This list of three grades of Representative Electors is made with special reference to New York and other large States, with whose method of Political Organization, in both parties, it so far accords. In smaller States one of them might perhaps be advantageously left out.

C.—Office Tenure.

Finally, I propose a new rule of Office Tenure. Although this system provides that the people shall be periodically called together in the manner described for a fresh expression of their will, it is not intended that any public functionary whatsoever shall hold Office for any defined term, but only at the pleasure of the power that appoints him. Accordingly, provision should be made for the re-assembling at any moment of each Popular Constituency and College of Electors, at its own call, to review its work. It is believed that such special meetings would very seldom be resorted to, or needed, but occasions will sometimes arise when the public welfare would strongly demand them. Meantime, every Office Holder, Representative Elector or any other, shall hold his place till his successor is appointed.

Innumerable details and diversities in the practical application of this system of political construction, to make it work without hitch, and to suit it to all variety of situations, are here left unconsidered: only its general method is undertaken to be set forth.

—Although to me, who have so long contemplated the subject, this abstract statement of my project looks plain enough, as it must also to every expert of politics, yet, in order that the most careless and uninstructed reader may not fail fully to comprehend it, it may be worth while specially to set forth the method of its application in a particular case. For this purpose we will take a city of, say, sixty thousand inhabitants; which we will suppose to be divided into eight wards, and into two Assembly districts; to lie part in one county and part in another; and to comprise but a third of a Congressional, and half of a judicial district.

We will suppose the first ward of such city to contain fourteen hundred and fifty voters. Let these be divided, in the manner above described, into nine lots. Each of these shall choose an Elector, and the nine Electors shall constitute a Ward College for the appointment of all the officers of the ward.

Joined in a City College with the Electors of all the other wards, they shall choose a mayor, treasurer, city attorney, and so on.

The Electors from whatever wards constitute an Assembly district shall collect by themselves to elect a Member of Assembly.

The Electors from the wards that lie in one county shall unite with the Electors from the other towns or cities in the same county in a County College, to choose a sheriff, clerk, prosecuting attorney, and other county officers.

Now, for the establishment of the second grade of Electoral Colleges, let the Assembly College, (which is taken partly because it represents a constituency most nearly uniform in numbers,) besides choosing an Assemblyman, also elect one (or, say, three) Delegates to represent it in a State College for the choice of State officers and federal senators; in a judicial college for the election of a member of the supreme court for its district; in a College for choosing a State senator, and in another College for the election of a member of the federal House of Representatives, and of a Presidential Elector.

Finally, let the Presidential Electors from all the States, chosen as above, in College assembled at Washington, say who shall be the nation's head.

In the case of a great city it would be expedient to have the City Electoral College raised to the second class, by constituting it of delegates from the several assembly, or ward Colleges.

So, when a State senatorial district is small in numbers, its representative in the legislature should be chosen, like an assemblyman, by a College of Electors of the first class, that is, composed of the immediate delegates of the popular constituencies within the district.

Also, in States of narrow dimensions it might be better to have all the members of the highest judicial bench chosen by the State College.

Other examples of possibly expedient variations in the application of this system hardly need to be given; for such is its flexibility that it can be logically adapted to every arrangement of the civil divisions of the country.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PECULIAR FEATURES OF THIS PLAN.

SIMPLE as is this scheme, and brief in description, it nevertheless materially alters the customary attitude of democracy in quite a number of particulars. Let us look at the chief of them, summarily, in their rationale.

(*a.*) *The Lot-drawn Popular Constituency.*

In the first place, it furnishes, in the Lot-drawn Constituency of the Primary Representative Elector, a new integration of democracy. This method of dividing up popular power has the advantage over the geographical, which now universally obtains, of allowing of no fraud or injustice whatsoever,—such as Gerrymandering, constituencies of equal political weight but of unequal numbers, and the like prevailing wrongs to democracy. It has the still greater advantage of tripping by the heels the professional Political Organizer, by making up the popular constituency anew at every election. Besides, mingling together afresh at frequent periods, as it does, all the various elements and individualities of society, it will surely effect a truer representation of the common will, from hour to hour and under all circumstances, than any other system has effected, or promises to effect. Here no special attempt can cope with general opinion and influence. When the germ of democratic authority shall be so symmetrically shaped, its fruits will surely never be deformed.

It is fit to remark in this connection that other than geographical divisions of political society are not infrequent in history, nor have they been by any means unsuccessful. Castes and aristocracies are examples. But one nearer akin to my method is furnished in the *centenarii* of the Goths and Visigoths ; a device borrowed by the Middle Ages from the military colonies of conquering Rome, and passed in turn to England's great law-giver, King Alfred, in the tithing-man and similar functionaries. In that institution there was, to be sure, no lot-drawing, but there was a narrow numerical integration of political society, like what is here proposed: and that that was mainly a convenience of power, while this is meant to be in aid of liberty, does not diminish its force in illustration of my argument. The wisdom of old Greece employed it in the selection of juries, (discasterai,) as we do now. Moreover, the lot is sanctioned in both of the Testaments. In short, innumerable instances of its application to matters of social adjustment fully entitle it to be ranked among the methods of nature.

(*b.*) *A new and needed Singleness and Simplicity of Popular Function in Politics.*

Under this system the voter, as a member of any large constituency, will have before him the plain and easy business of helping to select a representative from among his neighbors to act for him in the establishment of high authority. Thus will his work be cleared from difficulty, and his conscience from doubt.

This surely is no small reform. Under our present constitutions we are set to an impossible task. At a recent election in Chicago sixty-eight public functionaries were to be voted for. It is about the same in every large community whenever it chooses its local, State and federal functionaries at the same time. Yesterday, November 7, 1876, I voted for quite two-thirds as many as that, though municipal officers and school commissioners were not to be elected then.

Now, the theory of democracy is, that in each case we vote for a man that we have good reason to think is eminently fit for the duties he will have to discharge; but the notorious fact is, that, nineteen times out of twenty, we know nothing whatever about him. Every year we are called upon to vote for forty men, more or less, scattered all over the city, the county, the State and the nation, each of whom is to be discovered by us to be qualified for the business we propose to set him at. The highest talent and industry, with every opportunity and vacant for the task, would hardly suffice to qualify a man properly to do this: and yet common folks, so much engrossed with the supreme business of getting a living and so thoughtless, are expected to do it! So ignorant are the mass of us, actually and of necessity, about the special qualifications of the several men we vote for, that if the names on the ticket were shifted round so that the candidate for congress were running for State engineer, the superintendent of education for coroner, and the sheriff for judge, it would be all the same to us in nine cases out of ten.

I know not what could more disgust every reflecting mind with our present system of elections than this feature of it, or more clearly demonstrate its unsoundness.

(*c.*) *The Voter will be acting within the sphere of his Intelligence and his Power.*

The three rank impostures that have been pointed out as inseparable from the present system of direct popular elections in large constituencies are here effectually expunged. *No longer, at the dictate of leaders whom we have not chosen, shall we vote for men whom we do not know, to discharge duties that we do not understand.*

(1.) As to power, the whole business of the voter will be within arm's length, and if he still remain the mere follower and tool of adroit politicians, which he will not, it will no longer be of necessity, as it is now, but of his own choice.

(2.) As to his knowledge of men, while it is not pretended that every voter in a town or ward personally knows all the other voters in it, it is claimed that, with some rare exceptions in new communities, the great majority of voters, either through actual intercourse or neighborhood repute, are well cognizant of the character of most of the prominent citizens of the precinct, and can therefore take intelligent part in the selection of a Primary Representative Elector. Consider what, in place of such trustworthy information, the average voter has now to rely on in this regard when he is called on to vote for Member of Congress or governor! almost absolutely nothing, save the reckless, venal or fanatical laudations and defamations of party candidates from the newspapers and the stump. Yet these avail to raise foul birds so high in public contemplation that they are taken for eagles, and to drag eagles in the dirt. Of all things, political reputation is now about the cheapest and most transitory. Out of ten names bruited and emblazoned in our politics a dozen years ago nine are already in oblivion, and the tenth hardly merits its exceptional remembrance. This is but the forgery of fame. I mean to restore its authentic signature.

(3.) The average voter is also fully competent to understand the substance of the business that his Representative is here set at. There is no mystification, complexity or profundity whatever about it.

(*d.*) *Calling the Roll.*

In the fourth place I introduce into the assembly of the people the calling of the roll when the vote is taken. This is customary in the business of all higher political bodies, such as municipal councils and Congress, as being necessary to order, attention, accuracy, completeness, and clear responsibility, and will here be equally conducive to the same important objects. The registry of voters cannot be of full avail against fraud without it.

(*e.*) *The Conference of the People.*

I make the actual Assembly of voters in Conference the bottom course of politics. "Kings, Lords and Commons," said Erskine, "are but a machine to put twelve men in a box." Here, conversely, a present, personal inquest of the people is made the original root and sole authorization of every grade and act of public power. If not the most novel, this is certainly the most virtuous feature of the system of democratic government here propounded.

Only when men are brought face to face do they fully understand each other, or can they hold true counsel; nor without such approach can concert of purpose or action be arrived at, and democracy unified and empowered. Here only are represented the secret deliberations of the hearthstone, and here only can the real voice of the people be heard: what is now prated of as that august note is but an echo of the call and cry of politicians. How essential are the actual assembly and consultation of the people to a true expression of their will and the exertion of their power, and how much they are an instinctive impulse of the spirit of democracy, may be seen in this, that in every political or social emergency, about war, taxes, charity or any thing else, a public meeting is always called for.

But there is no need to theorize about the matter: our own history furnishes the crowning demonstration of facts. I but copy in this feature of my system the old *town-meeting* of New England, and give its influence an universal scope. Whatever beneficent political instruction the country owes to that region, which, by general consent, is not small, was prepared in the township system. Nowhere else has democracy ever so highly distinguished itself. Let Thomas Jefferson bear witness to its enormous virtue. His embargo act, approved by all the nation besides, was contested by a mere handful of the people, seated far off in the circumference of the country, but wielding the advantage that is our present topic. His courageous spirit almost quailed before their opposition. "How powerfully," says he, "did we feel the energy of this system in the case of the Embargo! I felt the foundation of the government shaken under my feet by the New England township. There was not an individual in those States whose body was not thrown with all its momentum into action, and, although the whole of the other States were known to be in favor of the measure, the organization of this little minority enabled it to override the Union." "The longer he lived," says Mr. Parton, "the more he felt the need of a subdivision of territory like the towns of New England," nor did he cease to urge it upon Virginia until his dying day.

But the vital secret of the "energy of the township system of New England," this enthusiast of democracy failed after all fully to comprehend. It is not due, as he seems to have thought, principally to "organization," however important that may be; nor is it due to the mere propinquity of voters to the polls, enabling them easily to gather there, to which he in another letter ascribes it,—for surely the voters in our cities, now impotent, defrauded and robbed above all other communities, have no difficulty about that. The chief root of its virtue, as an element of politics, is in the gathering of neighbors and acquaintances in actual conference. Accordingly John Adams, when minister to the British court, replied to an inquiry about the cause of the superiority of New England in politics, that it was owing to the "town meeting, the school meeting, the church meeting and the meeting of the militia on training day." Here is the keystone of democracy. In the presence of the popular assembly tyrants tremble, and throughout history it has been a chief care with them to forbid, or at least to supervise it. Whenever its now fast waning influence in our politics shall wholly disappear, we shall shove off into unfathomed depths.

In such assemblages alone has democracy shown well, because only here is it in full possession of itself. Only when its units of influence are in the presence of each other can each enjoy its rightful sway, and a genuine result be begot. In this encounter and combat of native powers the base but showy elements of demagogism and fanatic partisanship are sent flying, like coruscating cinders between the blacksmith's hammer and the anvil, while solid metal remains and receives the workman's impress. So, too, by the heat and force of intimate contact and discussion, all diverse impulses and intentions are here welded into a homogeneous whole, forming a shaft of power whose mighty motion might well be felt, as Jefferson felt it, beneath the distant seats of fixed authority.

Meantime, this open court is in the way of all wrongful procedure. Many vicious things are done in a corner that would never be dared in the forum.

Conduct of this Conference.

But the probable behavior of a section of the people thus gathered by impartial lot for the choice of a Representative Elector deserves more particular consideration: for as all the conclusions of geometry are ultimately based on that simple proposition in the beginning of Euclid where one triangle is laid upon another, so the success of the whole frame of government as here set out will depend upon the demeanor of this little assembly. Like that proposition too, this must be studied with the mind's eye; for though political truth in its crude and partial forms may be collected from history and statistics, in its exactitude and completeness it is the deduction of an informed imagination only. The comparison may be carried a step farther: as in that proposition it is shown that when three chief elements fall together all the rest must coincide, so here, if popular power, intelligence and opportunity are at hand, democracy will not fail to do its perfect work in every particular

(1.) In the first place, all the circumstances of this occasion will be favorable to the full autonomy of the people. Here surely the anticipatory arts by which self-seeking politicians now get control of the party Caucus will find little opportunity or inducement. Time will be wanting between the making-up and the session of this fresh formed constituency to hunt out and manipulate its scattered members, and the advantage to be gained thereby will be too small, distant, and uncertain. Above all, this Reformed Caucus *cannot be packed.* Of course there is nothing to hinder a previous consultation of its partisan members, or a combination of interests, opinions or influences for uniting upon a particular man as candidate for Representative Elector: but neither is there any thing objectionable to the spirit of democracy in their doing so. The supreme excellence of this feature of my system is, that all such arrangements, and all specialties and diversities, will be brought up with a round turn to a common mooring when the general constituency meet together face to face.

(2.) In this equal and law-ruled assembly of the people the tricks, frauds and brow-beating that constantly characterize the present irresponsible party Caucus will have no chance. No minor faction can prevail, as so often it does now, by virtue of "having the organization," nor any sinister ambition or conspiring clique secretly carry on its corrupt negotiations. Here will be no sudden turning of the hat, no repeating, no false counting and no false returns. The politician, in a word, will be as other men.

(3.) Meantime all democratic preferences and opinions will have a fair field, and whatever influence justly belongs to character, talent, position, occupation, property, education, or any other element of social force, will find full scope.

(4.) Add to this the gravity of the occasion, the retirement and quiet, and the unimpeded opportunity for consultation, deliberation and debate, and it can hardly be conceived how the action of this Primary Constituency will be other than truly representative of the sober popular will.

But what manner of man is likely to be chosen, under these circumstances, by this microcosm of democracy, to take the place of the present omnipotent delegate of the party Caucus? Will the mass of the people, acting freely and within the sphere of their knowledge, be likely to prefer corrupt and incompetent representatives? If they will, then surely democracy must forever be a failure. For my part I am confident that they will not: but the answer of each of my readers to this vital question will depend on his estimate of human nature as it now shows itself in this country. This inquiry is concerned (1) with popular virtue, and (2) with popular intelligence.

(1.) As to the former point, there appears to be a growing tendency, much promoted by recent sorry phenomena in our politics, to regard all men as of evil disposition. But this does not accord with my observation. I am satisfied that the great majority of civilized mankind are ready to do what is right, even at some sacrifice of self. This is to be governed by a sense of duty. But, however that may be, the voter, in the position where I put him, is going to do the best he knows how, because here the path of duty and the path of interest will almost always coincide. Not more than one in ten of your neighbors has, or can have, so great other concern about politics as to see that the public business is wisely, justly and economically conducted. It is impossible to imagine what sufficient temptation the mass of the community can have knowingly to bestow the function of the primary Representative Elector upon men unworthy of it.

(2.) As to the intelligence of mankind in general, few have a lower estimate of it than myself. But I hold that within the scope of his faculties and observation the clown is as wise as the philosopher. To deny the general trustworthiness of human judgment, within the field of its information, is to take away all foothold of conclusion in morals, politics, science and everything else. What I claim to do, is to set the voter at a work that his capacity and knowledge are equal to. I limit his function to taking part in the choice of a Representative Elector from within the area of his neighborhood and intimacy. Seldom are men who come in frequent contact falsely judged of by each other. Far-flying rumor is deceitful, but the testimony of comrades is true. No honest man fears to trust his reputation at large to those whom he lives among. There is no companionship that does not in the main recognize its wise members and its honest, its fools and its rogues. The deacon of a church is nearly always representative of its piety, the president of a club of its spirit, the captain of a band of gold-hunters of its enterprise and hardihood.

How just is the reputation of men among their neighbors in the long run I lately noticed a striking proof in the Hall of the Board of Trade in my own town. Here are hung up, for honor and example, the portraits of certain of her long-resident citizens—of James Platt, Henry Fitzhugh, Thomas Kingsford and Alvin Bronson. Not in a single instance was this distinction unmerited. Also I well remember how, when I came to the same town a quarter of a century ago, expecting to make it my permanent home, I held attentive ear to learn what general report might say about my future neighbors. I heard that A was peaceful and B pugnacious, that C was honest but indiscreet, D generous but unjust, that E was impulsive, and F cunning, that G could be trusted, but not H, that this politician was a demagogue and that a wire-puller, that this man had education and that man sense, the most neither, and mighty few both,—and so on through the whole category of qualities and qualifications. After a long period of familiarity I find not a name in this directory of character that was misprinted.

The trusty guidance of repute is not lacking, as some might suppose it to be, even in the populous wards of great cities. Men are thick scattered through New York, even in the lowest wards, whose worth is nigh as well recognized among the people as the corners of the streets. It is from among these that democracy will select its Representative Electors when it is gathered in the unembarrassed constituency that I have set up. No doubt this method will do better in some cases than in others. I do not claim that the best man will always be chosen, or even a good man. The highest qualities are somewhat above ordinary comprehension, and there may be some neighborhoods where folly and misbehavior are at a premium. This only is claimed—that the men chosen by the people in this free conference and fair struggle to act for them will be their true *Representatives.* Surely there will in general be poor chance in this arena, unless I grossly misunderstand the American people, for the mere demagogue or the jobber, the man of putty or the man of crotchets, the lavish man or the penny-wise and pound-foolish man, or any of the other unworthy characters that now keep us in trouble and disgrace. On the contrary it is believed that, as Members of Council in the Colonies obtained their commissions from the king on account of "their wealth, station and loyalty," so here will they alone who have a solid stake in the country, an honorable standing, and a patriotic spirit, receive the confidence of democracy, now first endowed with its royal prerogative.

(*f.*) A large extension of the

Representative Principle in Elections

is the next important feature of this system. In our present constitutions this method of democracy shows itself but brokenly, surmounting here and there in an unsystematic way the dead level of the ballot box. A logical completeness in its application is here attempted. In all cases where a constituency is too large for the convenient assembly, orderly consultation, or presumably intelligent action of the whole body of it, it is to be cut up into handy squads, which will act, not directly, but through delegates.

The right application of the principle of Representation has always been regarded by philosophic minds as the key to the success of popular government; and has accordingly employed the constant attention of the framers and students of organic law in republican societies. In modern times Montesquieu, Locke, Sieyes, Hamilton, Bentham, Grote, Hildreth, Mills and a thousand other friends of liberty have laboriously considered it, with the result of innumerable various conclusions and devices.

The framers of our own institutions gave the problem careful thought, and embodied their conclusions in the election of federal senators by State legislatures, in the Colleges of Presidential Electors, and in the appointment of judges and various executive functionaries by a governor, mayor or president, with or without the advice and consent of legislators or aldermen.

But the growing misbehavior of our politics has brought the subject into fresh discussion. At the present time general opinion, authorship. and the work of constitutional conventions, seem to be about equally divided between a closer limitation, and a farther extension of the principle of Representation. On the one hand, seen that the colleges of Presidential Electors have become the mere mouth-piece of Political Organization, and even threaten to be robbed at Washington of the power to certify for their respective States, the immediate choice of the federal executive by the people is called for. So, in view of the partisanship and other vices of the State legislatures that now elect Federal Senators, it has been proposed to bestow the choice of these in the same quarter. On the other hand, the election of the high judiciary and other officers of wide jurisdiction by the people not working satisfactorily, many demand a return to the system of appointment by governors and mayors, or by legislatures and common councils. When New York City finds itself suffering from the ballot-box, it turns to Commissions appointed by the legislature at Albany for rescue: these using her almost worse, the popular voice is recalled to power. In the argument for neither side does either reason or the lessons of history much appear. Each cause finds its chief strength in the failures of the other,—and finds there indeed no mean support; for certain it is that the results of our present ways of establishing public authority in all large constituencies, whether by popular ballot, executive appointment, or however else, furnish little to be proud of.

It would be a long undertaking to analyze and set forth in theory the full relations of the Representative principle in popular government; and still more would it be laborious for the writer, and tedious to the reader, to illustrate and confirm the argument by sufficient historical examples. But, fortunately, this toil and tedium can be spared. If we seek aright, full instruction can be got from higher quarters than dubious speculation, or the misty records of governments gone by. We stand in the very presence of phenomena of overwhelming significance in this regard. The spontaneous appearance and now universal rule of Political Organization, whose system of Representation I little more than copy, furnish a demonstration of nature's methods that only fatuity can disregard. It is "a higher law" than was ever written on parchment that has put the present Caucus and Convention on the throne. They are of nature's royal line, and will never yield their place till democratic power shall clothe itself with their own purple habiliments and wield their very sceptre.

How natural and indispensable is this method of democracy may be witnessed in the fact that it is now being adopted in Great Britain and Prussia, *pari passu* with the growth of popular rule. For example, I notice that Mr. Jacob Bright was nominated (February, 1876,) for Member of Parliament from Manchester by a Convention of Caucus Delegates. As fast as the influence of an aristocracy of blood and money give way, Political Organization must take their place. There is no one of us that goes to the party Caucus, or calls on another people to do it and blames them if they do it not, or that sits in the party Convention, but what bears witness to the solid authority of Political Organization. Not less do they who in independent popular council of whatever name undertake to displace old parties; for they constantly adopt the very methods of them whom they rebel against.

Here surely are sufficient signs of some grave defect in our present system. The fact is that the chair of true democratic authority is left vacant by our written constitutions, and that Political Organization, a child of nature, has seated itself thereon. Born out of honest wedlock though the intruder be, he has good blood in his veins. Incapable to expel, we must legitimate him. For the self-seeking Politicians who are now his secretaries and chamberlains we must substitute men of our own selection. Thus will our present tyrant become our benefactor.

The most that my proposal differs from the present construction of our politics is that I merge election in nomination, making form and substance coincide. The Poll is now, notoriously, a mere reflexion of the Caucus and Convention. To set the people to review at the ballot box the action of their Representative Delegates would be merely to carry along a troublesome superfluity.

(*g.*) *Graded Representation.*

A logical Gradation in the Electoral function is also here attempted, such as will keep pace with the expanding importance of political charge between the neighborhood and the nation, and correspond with that actual range of capacity among men that reaches from good sense to statesmanship. Hardly can this plan fail to secure that the upper Colleges of Electors will be composed of men widely known for virtuous character, for understanding of the requirements of the higher public service, and for acquaintance with whomever in the precinct is fittest to meet them. This virtue, surely, will this system have,—that the superior functionaries of law, judgment and execution will be appointed by those on whom public confidence is, as it were, accumulated, by the elect of the elect, by number multiplied into quality.

Only in such a way can large society hope to enjoy, save by rare accident, the instruction and guidance of its superior members; and only till this comes about can it be well conducted. Common minds are engrossed with common things, or look on greater with vision dim, distorted and befogged; but great intelligence, like him who sits in the clear air of the mountain top, gathers wide regions in its survey.

What we lack above all else is statesmanship; but we shall never have statesmen to rule the state till its rulers are chosen by statesmen. The judgment of peers is the only judgment. No man can appreciate a qualification that he does not in some degree possess himself. The commonalty, in every wide jurisdiction, has nigh always preferred a Wilkes to a Burke, a Danton to a Sieyes, a Matthew Lyon to a Robert Morris,—being incapable, at such a distance, of distinguishing worth from worthlessness.

The Ministry of Great Britain, so long and so constantly victorious over all the Eastern hemisphere, is an example of the virtue of the principle of Graded Representation. That authority is not chosen by the people themselves, nor by the mass of their immediate representatives in the House of Commons, but by a score or so of men whom the opinion of Parliament silently appoints to the duty.

That the measure of talent, knowledge and integrity among Electors of the higher ranks will be in proportion to the magnitude of their charge can hardly be doubted. All along in this promotion the same suitable intelligence and interest will obtain that make local government good for local purposes, and general for general. The verdict of long history is not more trusty than will be democratic choice when it shall travel the sober stages that are here set for it. As in literature the criticism of successive generations constantly discriminates more justly between Bacon and Boyle, Shakespeare and Ben. Johnson, so by the repeated scrutiny and sifting of this system will democracy in its larger forms surely discover its worthiest guides. Only in this way can the sneering but pertinent inquiry of Carlyle, " how can we expect forty millions, mostly fools, to have wisdom to get themselves well governed?" be answered.

It deserves to be mentioned that these Electors, not less in the higher Colleges than in the lowest, will be chosen in a profound signification by their neighbors. Only with narrow and slothful natures does neighborhood mean mere proximity of place. The fellowship of intellect, information and sentiment has no such boundaries. Genius communes with genius across continents and seas. The great scientific and benevolent bodies of the time are composed of members scattered in geography, but collected in sympathy. In every department of thought, business or philanthropy where freedom is, its magnates gather in circle; and it will be so in politics, whenever it shall be loosed from its present bondage.

In the choice of the highest public functionaries by this method such spontaneity of just results may fairly be looked for as we partly witness in our mother country, where, in some crisis, a new cabinet, disowning royalty, aristocracy, democracy, hierarchy and every other special interest and influence in the record of its birth, springs suddenly into life, raised by the incantation of the time, and armed with the gathered force of the national will. In this country, on the other hand, such change of administration now comes about through the long-labored combination of self-seeking Politicians only, gathering to their party side, after infinite contest and hurly-burly, a few more voices of the distracted people.

In fine, this system of Graded Representation, is believed to be the true architecture of civil society in all its larger constructions. To establish authority in city, State or nation by general ballot is but the random piling of a cairn. But I build up the structure brick by brick, beam by beam, and story by story. The right of the majority to rule is the immovable foundation of the fabric, and the prevailing sense of men its sound material; its rising stories will surely embody in succession still nobler conceits, and its lofty entablature and crowning dome cannot but express at last the highest purposes of the age.

But the probable behavior of the Representative Elector, who is here made the Grand Vizier of democracy, deserves a moment's closer attention; for all is not fair that seems. Our present election methods are specious, but their actual results are damnable. Will not this system also disappoint us?

That the Representative Elector of whatever grade will be fairly competent to his duty, and of reputed integrity, his free selection by a constituency, whether College or people, that must be presumed to know him, is the best guarantee than can be asked for. If, therefore, this trustee of democracy betray his trust, it must be because of his indifference to the public welfare, or from a hidden corruptibility. As to the former, no man can be regardless of the general weal till he is regardless of himself, and till all the wells of sympathy are dried up within his breast. About the probability of the latter men will differ according to their various estimates of the virtue of mankind, as triply derived from temperament, consciousness, and what they think they see. Pessimists, self-excusing knaves, and the shallow-sighted minds that take the behavior of our politics for a demonstration of human nature, constantly echo the saying of Walpole "that every man has his price." But this at the worst was never true except in the signification that "all that a man hath will he give for his life." Nor is it true even there. The long record of martyrdom for religion, country, honor and humanity abundantly shows that there are those whom no money can buy.

However this may be, it is difficult to conceive, in the case of towns, wards and other small constituencies, where the sufficient pecuniary, or other wrongful inducement is to come from that will draw aside from the path of duty any considerable portion of the men who may be chosen by their companions to represent them in the Primary Electoral College. With the rising grades of this Representation the sense of right, it cannot be doubted, will constantly strengthen; so that this security of great affairs will be in proportion to their temptations.

Meanwhile, whatever gives honor heart and holds it to its post will here abound. No ribbon, medal or diploma was ever such stamp of merit, could command such wide respect, or so stir the emulation of dutiful men, as will the position of Representative Elector. In her day of glory Venice caused to be inscribed in a *libro d'oro* the names of her worthiest citizens. When this system shall be in force the list of Representative Electors will be the Golden Register of the Republic. To prophecy the wanton self-degradation of him who has reached the dignity to be recorded there is to spit on human nature. It is to disregard all the lessons of history too, for always the love of honor has been about the last sentiment to depart from the human mind.

It is no small thing, in this regard, that the position of Representative Elector will be one of peculiar confidence. To him, as to a friend trusted without guarantee, society hands over its whole welfare. *Noblesse oblige*. Honor is bred in places of trust. If all other bonds were wanting, this would not fail alone to hold the Representative Elector to the faithful and considerate discharge of his duty. It is great argument for this conviction, that when the Presidency lately hung suspended in a feather balance no trustee of party power could be found who would sell out.

Moreover, the Representative Elector will discharge his functions in the full view of them who have confided in him. Here is no place to hide. Horrid ignominy out of doors, as well as shame within the heart, will forever attend the abuse of that confidence. It is less terrible to bear the condemnation of all the world beside than to meet the eye of him who has put his trust in us and been betrayed.

This sentiment of honor, it should be noticed, is especially needed in public life; for to the calculating conscience it will never seem an hundredth part so bad to steal from the public a thousand dollars, where it would hardly be felt by the individual, as to rob the private pocket of a shilling.

The sentiment of fellowship also, it is believed, will urge on this officer of democracy in the path of virtue. An *esprit du corps*, such as still guards the character of our army and navy amid surrounding degradation, may fairly be expected to hold sway in the Electoral Colleges. The fraternity of honor—to refer again to the faithfulness of politicians toward each other—should surely be as strong as the fraternity of fraud.

In judging how the Representative Elector will demean himself, it should be remembered that his place, unlike that of the delegate of Political Organization whom he is meant to supersede, will not be the acquisition of his own labor and expenditure, and the opportunities of which he can accordingly, by no mean claim, call his own property, to be bargained about like the products of any other farm, but will be the free bestowal of his neighbors and acquaintances.

Neither will this magistrate be able to throw the responsibility of his course back upon party authorization or requirement, as the Representatives of Political Organization do of theirs; for, not a portion of the people, but the whole, will have participated in his election. Nor can he cast it forward upon a confirmatory vote of the people; for there will be here no subsequent popular poll to pass upon his action. Now when a bad man is put into power, the people lay it to the Politicians who nominated him, and Politicians to the people who elected him: but there will be no room for such evasion here.

But what is there, it may be asked, to hinder self-seekers, banded together, from managing the Colleges of Electors as they now do Party Conventions, and fixing appointments to suit their own interests? Nothing, I grant, absolutely nothing, but the character of the Electors themselves, doubly spurred, as they will be, by the greatness and directness of their obligations, to do what is right. Fraud and falsity will surely have no advantage in this open assembly of the people's Delegates, any more than in the retired Conference of the people themselves. If liberty's selected men betray her here, then liberty is a delusion. But they will not. These bodies will come together without previous sinister obligation, concert or entanglement, and will find both full opportunity and every inducement toward integrity and independence. Not that there will be no room for the contest or combination of interests, no demand for a distribution of offices according to geography or influence, or that party, prejudice and selfishness will have no voice,—but that the power of all such mischievous elements will be the most diminished that human nature admits of, and that it cannot but be infinitely less than it is in the Conventions of Party Politicians which now control our destinies.

Let it be noticed that how these Colleges of Electors will conduct themselves is by no means to be judged of by the behavior of any of the bodies that under our present constitutions exercise resembling functions. These all are utterly lost to their original design. Our Presidential Colleges, set, in theory, to an independent and most exalted duty, have long since notoriously become in fact but the honorary secretaries of Political Organization. They have escaped rottenness by petrifaction. So, the legislatures that choose Federal Senators and many State functionaries, and the common councils to whom is now committed the appointment of various municipal officers, are the product, and therefore the servitors, of the same evil authority, and are habited perpetually in the foul garments of their parentage. In the best of them democracy is metamorphosed into mere partisanship. No more were such bodies as the Council of Appointment under the first constitution of this State at all analogous to what is here proposed. That was a narrow dynasty, gathered by hereditary pretension, bureaucracy and party intermixed, and giving little employment to the virtues of democracy at large.

(*h.*) *Isolation of the Function of Appointment.*

It is the next peculiarity of this system that it wholly separates the appointing power from every other political charge. This important business is now constantly added, in the most promiscuous way, to legislative, executive, and even judicial duties. The President not merely is the executive and holds supremacy in our legislature, but also has substantially the construction of the judicial bench. Governors and mayors find added to their executive function the making of no end of appointments that have properly no connection with it. The Federal Senate,—surely occupied enough with making laws,—must also take part in the appointment of judges, collectors, post-masters and foreign ministers. So, State legislatures help appoint Federal Senators and State functionaries. The like with municipal councils. Even the judiciary is diverted from its proper business in this direction,—appointing, in the State of New York, for instance, commissioners of lunacy, excise, railroads and so on, and, in Philadelphia, various municipal officers. Such mixture and multiplication of concerns can but embarrass every public duty. The affair of selecting rulers is wholly foreign to the special capabilities that are needed to make, interpret or maintain the laws, and should be set apart by itself, as will be done under this plan.

Thus will not a few of the vain checks and balances which incompetent political mechanics have laboriously contrived for the regulation of democratic government be got out of the way. When the people shall hold sway, no check will be needed; and when their will shall settle on one side, no counteracting balance can avail.

My plan involves a still deeper virtue.

(*i.*) *Men, not Measures,*

will become the chief cynosure of popular regard.

This is a great and pregnant innovation. Now, for the most part, in all large constituencies at least, we vote for this man or that because we suppose him to represent certain measures or policies, as customarily set forth in the party platform. The prevailing idea is, that the opinion of the mass of voters should regulate politics. Accordingly, public men listen for "the voice of the people" to tell them how to decide the tariff question, the railroad question and the currency question. If they neglect to attend to this duty we "instruct" them, by petitions, and in public meetings. The growing tendency to submit public measures of one sort and another to direct popular vote has the same signification.

My scheme of politics means to change all this by removing the helm of great affairs beyond the immediate reach of popular opinion. It is expected that the Representative Elector, to whom is here intrusted the establishment of all high authority, will be chosen without much regard to specific measures, save when some such vital question as that between war and peace may come up.

This object is not only incompatible with our present system of democratic construction, but, I am aware, is also in conflict with the current ideas and efforts of patriotism. "Principles, not Persons," is the customary boast of political conscientiousness. In accordance therewith the people are constantly urged to inform themselves on public questions. It is lately proposed to teach politics in the common schools, so as to make all our children—*even the g*[illegible]—wise in the business of the State!—Nevertheless, the change that I intend accords with common sense, philosophy and all the lessons of the past.

That the will of the majority is the logical and lasting basis of political power has already been claimed. It carries with it physical superiority, and may therefore fitly find expression on any issue that threatens resort to the final argument of force. Whatever its value as a guide to what is right, it will often settle what is expedient. Thus the *plebiscites* of Louis Napoleon, notwithstanding all their fraudulence, were peaceful allies of the eternal law of the strongest, fending off for a time the bloody contest of arms. Neither is it by any means denied that popular opinion, within the sphere of its capacity and opportunity, is a worthy guide. The average voter can tell well enough, for example, whether a new wagon-road ought to be opened between the east side of the town and the west, though his judgment cannot but be poor about the profitableness of bonding his farm to build a railroad to Boston or Chicago. So, the saying that "all men are wiser than any one man" is of incontestible truth whenever instinct, long experience and wide observation hold dispute with the conceits of the individual brain;—as when idiotic sanitarians say that it is unhealthy to eat pork, or for the farmer's barnyard not to be well sewered; or when hygienic professors advise Dickens at fifty years of age to take a brisk walk of ten miles every morning, hurrying him to his grave. So, too, the prime sentiments and doctrines of humanity and justice, of family, property, freedom and equality, have their stoutest sanction and security in prevailing popular ideas. Neither will I deny that in the highest political walks a certain vague public opinion about the state of the commonwealth still retains some virtuous force, notwithstanding its blindness and dispersion.

What I claim, and what my system in this respect proceeds on, is that ordinary intelligence is wholly unequal to the solution of the many nice questions that mostly occupy the attention of political society in civilized communities; and that to submit them in any way to its determination is a grievous mistake. Look around among your neighbors and tell me how many of them have any good understanding of the political issues that are now presented! The people, like children, know what they want, but they do not know what they need. Their incapacity was seen of old. "Ill fares it where the multitude have sway," said Homer and the Stagyrite. The virtues of direct popular rule, which is what voting on measures chiefly means, were tried out long ago in Greece and Rome. If those pure and master races in their numerous experiments of direct democracy did always fail, hardly can the mixed, inferior, and perhaps decaying populations of Brooklyn, Kansas, Mexico or France hope to succeed. To all but superior intelligence the issues of modern politics are not only dubious but unintelligible. They do not come within the purview of that "common sense of the people" to which Jefferson and the other early apostles of American democracy so confidently trusted. The average voter can tell how his assessment grows, how much dearer his tobacco is in consequence of the federal excise, and whether his representative in Congress or the State legislature stands by his party and fills the show bill of the campaign, and about there his political appreciation stops. When you go beyond the limits of actual personal observation, stimulated by immediate interest, you leave the companionship of common minds. Any system of democratic construction that overlooks this truth must forever fail.

If but one matter were in question, voting for measures might do; but our politics constantly present a score of disputes, and the candidate who is with us on a part of them will be sure to disagree with us on the rest. To which of them shall we attend when we vote for "principles not men?"

In disregard of these incontestible truths our present system of elections in effect calls upon the people to vote on the various and difficult questions of finance and currency, modes of taxation, free trade, internal commerce, usury, Indian policy, minority representation, the construction of municipalities, the reconstruction of the South, pisciculture and San Domingo. Time is wanting to the busy people for the mastery of so many various topics. But, make life a leisure, and still average intelligence would be as incompetent to the work as it is to predict an eclipse of the sun.

This system, on the contrary, proceeds on the idea that large and difficult matters in politics ought some way to be submitted by the people at large to superior skill, just as we trust the lawyer, the doctor and the architect in matters with which we are unacquainted ourselves. But in large constituencies, as has been shown, the voter, of himself, can neither discover nor empower such special skill; and therefore he must needs hand over the business to commissioners, set to carry out no particular plan, but to put the general spirit of society into function.

In a word, when the average member of any large constituency has taken part in the choice of a Representative elector he has done all that he can advantageously do. It is "men, not measures" that I claim to be the key of democratic success. I mean to raise *personal character*, the Cinderella that now, neglected and forlorn, obeys unworthy sisters, to its rightful throne.

Ideas are but an appendage of humanity. Measures are the work of men. Every government, at least for the current generation, is the rule of individuals far more than of doctrines or even of development. Personality is the prime factor in the career of society, whether in war or in peace, for conservation or for correction, in every virtuous and in every vicious field. There is no page of history that has not been made dark or bright by its impress, nor any passing crisis but what is concluded by its force, or, that failing, falls into the wheel of fortune. Whatever has been done worthy of memory in Judea, Greece, Rome or any modern nation, was done, not by general popular movement, but by the individual might of David, Pericles, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Cromwell, Washington, Cobden, Cavour, Bismarck, Lincoln. In this sign,—not as standing on any platform of doctrines, but by the force of all behavior,—conquered Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet, and whoever else, less exalted, in ancient or modern times, has helped to shape the destiny of mankind. Democracy can never thrive, nor do deeds worthy of itself, but must still grope and suffer, till it is guided by the light, and submits to the rule, of superior minds. At the present moment the success of governments throughout the world is pretty much in proportion to the prevalence of this element. Thus is explained why Russia is better governed than Mexico, Belgium than Pennsylvania, the silliest township than this great nation; Boston, where character still maintains some lingering foothold in the political field, than Chicago, where it has hardly had time or chance to sprout; the Blackfoot Indians, considering all the circumstances, by their chiefs, than Manhattan Island by its aldermen. It is confirmatory matter of history that whenever the extension of political communities has overpassed the appreciation and sway of personal character, political disaster has constantly ensued. In the governments of antiquity, in the free cities of Italy and Germany where modern democracy was swaddled, and in the free cities of the United States where, once so flourishing, it now seems hastening to its fall, it was just so long as public function staid within the embracing reach of this native potentate that the public business prospered. Throughout our politics the public administration has decayed in correspondence with the wane of this influence; nor is there any part of it on which enlightened patriotism can now look with any composure save where that influence still lingers. It has not waned because we are insensible to it. Consider how popular admiration is stirred whenever a vigorous personal initiative is undertaken, either against Rings, for an idea, or, even, toward self-advancement! Society instinctively demands leaders. Hero worship is the religion of democracy. Leave out the personal force and attraction of Clay, Webster, Van Buren, Calhoun, Benton, Wright, Seward, Douglas, and a few more such men, and you leave out the soul of our political story during the last half century. Nothing is so appreciable to human intelligence as the strong visage of personal character. Of all the judgments of men, those are the most just that concern men. Here anthropomorphism does not delude. Seldom does the final moment leave in doubt, among those who have consorted with him, the understanding, the integrity or the temper of any man. The whisper of neighbors about the grave is an epitaph that never lies.

But this estimate of men must be based, as already indicated, on the solid ground of actual acquaintance, through personal intercourse or prevailing repute. It is this kind alone that is meant to be employed here, and this kind is undertaken to be made full use of. Under the present system of elections it has little opportunity, save in the narrowest fields. Outside of these, the average voter has nothing to guide him but the noise of the public press, which now is little but a trade or a tool, but which yet outweighs in political influence all legitimate opinion.

I shall by no means deny that Americans sometimes elect to office men whose personal unworthiness ought to be well known to them; but I lay this slip to the stress that Political Organization brings to bear upon our conduct. Practically, it most often leaves us but a choice between the equally unfit candidates of two rival parties. In the cases where this is not the explanation it is the conceit of our own wisdom about measures that misleads, causing us to subordinate to that vain guide our far more trusty estimate of men. It is as the apostles of false seductive schemes of reform or progress principally that unworthy men sometimes get into political favor among their neighbors and acquaintances.

However all this may be, one thing at least is certain; viz: that the personal character of public men is absolutely the only safeguard of the public welfare. The past and the present alike proclaim that the spirit of the people, laws, constitutions, treaties, compacts, charters, bonds, investigations and penalties are a vain reliance. Only when legislators themselves are wise shall we have wise laws; only when judges are just can there be righteous judgment; only when the executive is vigorous will the government be strong. Especially absolute is the dependence of the commonwealth on the sort of men that manage affairs in large constituencies. Here the people of themselves have neither watch nor ward. There is no great public treasury that is not, despite all checks and guards of law, at the mercy of those who have it in charge; nor any policy that may not be fatally misdirected, before the people, be they ever so wise and attentive, can rally to its rescue.

Though this system intends to subordinate measures to men in democratic regard as a general rule, it is still expected that under it, whenever a worthy exigency shall arise, popular opinion will effectually assume the actual direction of affairs, reaching beyond its representative to the duties of that representative, and dictating, not only who shall make the laws, but what laws shall be made. By this I mean, that when such an issue as the right of secession from the Union, the annexation of Mexico, or war against Spain shall arise, the Representative Delegates of the people under this system will be chosen on that issue, and, through the several grades of Electoral Colleges, will convey the purposes of the nation to the headquarters of the nation. But nice subordinate questions will no longer trouble the deliberations of the people. These, it is believed, will a thousand times better be submitted to the selected intelligence that this system undertakes to put in authority, than be pooled, as now, in a party platform, and subjected to the scramble of interests, prejudices and enthusiasms that characterizes our present politics.

It has been objected to this feature of my system that it will not promote the "education" of the people in politics, but, rather, hinder it, by taking away its occasion and inducements. But it is impossible to hinder an impossibility. Political education of the mass of the people! Talk about making every man a chemist or a theologian, but do not talk about this. Men who would not willingly trust a jury to determine a trifling lawsuit confidently discourse about qualifying them by education for the right settlement of the innumerable difficult problems of modern politics! This delusion had some excuse at the era of the French Revolution, while the political capacity of the people had as yet had no sufficient modern test, and while it was still undetermined what the new diffusion or opportunity of knowledge by the art of printing might do for them, but it has none now. For nigh a century politics has been the earnest study of the American people—as capable as any in the world—but who will say that we have learned much? Nothing can be more silly than to expect to qualify the average voter by education for passing on the many various issues that the politics of his city, his county, his State and the nation constantly present. This is a breadth of accomplishment that the most industrious and devoted genius is hardly capable of. How long will it take the mass of your neighbors to get "educated" in the science of political economy, criminal law, municipal construction, pauperism, and no end of other such questions? Besides, whatever political education we may get is of no use to us so long as the Caucus and Convention select our rulers. It is of no avail for the people of the State or City of New York to study the science of government while they are still destined to have aldermen and legislators who have not studied it.

(*j.*) *Office Tenure.*

A new rule of Office Tenure is also here proposed—simple, uniform, and alone democratic. The proper term of office for legislative, executive and judicial functionaries in their various grades has been more or less a subject of dispute throughout our history; but without arrival at any uniformity of practice, or fixed conclusion of logic. One man is put in authority for one year, another for two, another for six, another for fourteen, another till three score years and ten, another for life, and another till his successor is appointed. So, some can be ousted for cause, and some without cause; some by various ways of impeachment and trial, and some by mere party force, and so on. The State of New York, between its Council of Appointment under the constitution of 1777, at whose will held the great majority of public officers throughout the State, and the present various regulation of the matter, has tried forty different terms of office, and as many ways of removal from office. Why should a Federal senator be elected for six years, and a State senator for two? or a president for one period, a governor for another, and a mayor for a third? Why should the various functionaries of a city hold office for different terms? or why should the county judge be re-eligible, and not the county sheriff? At Washington policy has been repeatedly blocked because the President has one term of office, Senators another, and Representatives a third. The same in State capitols and city halls, all over the country.

In place of this senseless and injurious hodge-podge, the mixed result of accident, old tradition and shallow device, I propose the single rule, that every public servant shall hold his place at the *momentary will of the power that appoints him.*

That fixed terms of Office are now of some little service, as a check to the rotation that parties and politicians constantly demand, is by no means denied; but it is contended that when these false influences shall be overthrown, as is undertaken to be done by this system of elections, even that meagre usefulness will be at an end.

Let it be noticed, in illustration and support of this new rule, that it is the general custom in private business, and that the British ministry and every other successful cabinet in Europe holds office but from day to day. Ill, surely, in like instruction, would it have answered if the commanders of armies in our late war had been appointed for a term of years, or had been removable only by formal trial and conviction.

No method but this can make democracy real. Now the people are sovereign only on election days, their supposed servants being their actual masters in the long interim between. But I make popular authority incessant. Time does not run against the king; and, if the people are to be king, their authority must not be in abeyance for an hour. To get rid of an unworthy public functionary till his term expires is now slow and difficult, if not impossible; but this rule of Office-Tenure furnishes an instant and perpetual court, where democracy will be at once complainant, judge and executioner. The people are not only entitled to the best service, but they have a right to be satisfied with it, and to a quick opportunity to correct their mistakes. The mere suspicion of dereliction from duty in the mind of the appointing power should warrant the removal of any public officer. Let there be afterwards whatever inquiry, and punishment or restitution fair dealing may demand: but the general welfare should by no chance wait on the expiration of terms, the investigation of committees or the slow judgment of courts. It should be "a word and a blow, and the blow first." Wrong to the individual is nothing: *salus populi suprema lex*.

Note that the Representative Elector of whatever rank will himself be subject to the same insecurity of station. This cannot but hold him the stronger to his duty; for, as to be chosen twice by his neighbors will raise him high in the scale of honor, so will it sink him low to have their confidence suddenly withdrawn. Hence encouragement to good, and great intimidation to evil motives in the discharge of his august and pregnant function.

It need not be feared that this new law of Office-Tenure will hinder public station from being worthily filled. It will be a terror only to sloth, venality and incompetence. Patriotism, industry, capacity and honorable ambition will all the more eagerly seek employ in this the most important and distinguished of occupations, as having much more to hope than to fear from such a rule.

As there will be here no technical restraint on removal from office, so will there be no artificial inducement towards it; and the combined result cannot but be that, on the whole, Office-Tenure will be prolonged. Seldom, we may be certain, will the lot-drawn popular constituency call itself together anew to change its Representative Elector without some urgent reason; nor will any College of Electors hastily discharge its appointees, to the discredit of its own judgment or motives. Neither when at defined periods new Colleges of Electors are chosen will they be likely to disturb the public service by wantonly introducing into it inexperienced and untested men. The same reasoning that promises that they will put good men into office guarantees that they will keep them there.

An incidental advantage of this plan is, that when a public officer dies in the midst of his term, as have three of our presidents in this very generation, his function need not long devolve upon a deputy, vice-president or lieutenant-governor who was never chosen to perform it, as it does now, sometimes to the serious disturbance of public counsels and popular quiet, but can in a moment be properly supplied at a new convening of them that appointed him.

Another is, that when every public functionary shall hold his place till his successor is appointed, according to the intention here, the "ties" between parties, ambitions or interests that now sometimes leave important offices vacant will effect no interference with the function and career of democracy.

k.) This system involves a beneficial

Concentration of Authority.

Sovereignty in this country is now divided up, and its several parts are constantly at sixes and sevens. As held Calhoun, and, I think, Jefferson before him, the federal constitution fixes no supremacy of command among the different departments of government. It is the like in States and cities. All about the judge enjoins the executive, the executive thwarts the legislature, and the legislature ignores them both; and so on round the other way. Thus democratic authority has no head, and member wars against member. But under this system the Colleges of the people's Representatives will have absolute control over every department of the public service. Thus many of the internecine contests between political interests that have so constantly marred the history of governments, free or attempting to be free, will surely be escaped.

(*l.*) *Official Responsibility.*

These features of my system carry with them an altered shape of Official Responsibility. They give it (1) a needed singleness, (2) a better direction and (3) a new sanction.

(1.) As our government is now constituted a public man often is responsible to the President who nominates him, to the Senate that must confirm him, to the House of Representatives which can impeach him, and to party, Political Organization and popular opinion besides. But under this system every high functionary will be responsible, immediately and only, to a College of Electors.

(2.) This new direction of Official Responsibility may look alarming, as doing away in some degree with that popular oversight of the public service that it is traditional and customary to regard as the main security of democratic rule: but the fact is, that in so largely discarding that guardianship I but strike out a thing that is mythical, unsuited or worn out. Certain it is, that in any large constituency there is not and cannot be, even if there ought, any effective Responsibility of public men to the mass of the voting population. It is not to these that they really owe their elevation now, or must look for support or advancement, but to themselves, to party, to the league of Politicians, and to the influence of special interests. Not to repeat my discussion of the other points, it is notorious that public place is now far more dependent on those narrow interests and purposes that have the advantage of concentration and organization than on general diffused sentiment and concern. To this advantage is it due that labor unions and granges, turn and turn about with railroads, banks, and other corporations, have largely had the mastery of affairs for the last thirty years;—as when, to illustrate the argument by a single example, a master stevedore or manufacturer who can bring a score of his employees to the caucus or the polls makes the alderman of his ward to do what he likes. Seldom does the legislator care much what the mass of his constituents think about his course. Sometimes, to be sure, he goes through the form of making report to them by a public speech or letter when he comes home from Washington or Albany, but he never forgets that his final audit is at the counter of Politicians.

A good deal is prated about the power of public opinion, and the responsibility of government to it, and what it is going to do with politicians if they don't look out; but the fact is that public opinion is about as impotent in New York as it is in St. Petersburg, and guides the administration of Hayes almost as little as that of the Khedive. Public opinion in the long run no doubt has a certain influence on the conduct of affairs, as a kind of cosmic element, but in the calculations of the present hour it might about as well be left out in this country. It is the tool, and not the master in our politics.

Suppose a public man to acknowledge his responsibility to public opinion, and to desire to obey it; how will he find out what it is? It has now no voice of its own. Surely he cannot learn its purposes from the public prints; for these, when not the mere organs of party or the advertisement of politicians, are but a gain-seeking proprietorship, no more speaking for democracy than the Church Journal, the Freeman's Journal, the Independent, or the Methodist represents the genius of catholic Christianity. As little can he discover it in the proceedings of popular assemblies, whether collected by politics or benevolence, in the interests of laborers or of tax-payers, of the producer or the consumer, of the whiskey dealer or the drunkard's wife; for such demonstrations are always partial, usually artificial, and often mercenary. Always, moreover, it is the shifting and surface elements in public opinion that are most conspicuous; and he who follows no better guide will surely imperil what he has in charge,—as when one, navigating the rapids of the St. Lawrence, watches its tumbling eddies, but sees not the direction of the main stream, wrecking his ship. But under this system public opinion will be readily found, as collected from its present vagueness and dispersion and centered in the Colleges of Representative Electors. Add, that the intelligence and virtue above the common which these Colleges may fairly be expected to possess, and which can but rise with their rising grades, will make accountability to them far more welcome to every worthy public functionary than dependence on popular ignorance, prejudice and caprice.

(3.) Finally, Responsibility looks toward authority, and authority is nothing without sanctions. Human nature feels accountable only to him who has the power to reward or to punish. Little sanction of either sort have the purposes of democracy now. To be sure we can vote for any man we please; but to do this, unless he is first nominated by the politicians of the party Caucus and Convention is to waste our vote. As to punishment for official misconduct of its various sorts by removal from office, fines, imprisonment and so forth, our power is even more shadowy and scant. Who ever knew an official head to fall into the basket because the people demanded it?

But by its peculiar law of Office-Tenure this system bestows on us the instant power not only to create but to destroy; to honor and reward, or to punish and disgrace. Here, surely, is a sanction that will make the public service responsive to the public will.

(*m.*) *A new Centre of Responsibility.*

Moreover, not only is the office-holder now responsible to nobody in particular but nobody is responsible for him. He is a sort of *filius nullius.* Whenever, in his misbehavior, the question of paternity comes up, politicians hide behind party, party behind politicians, and the people behind both, each accusing the others. Nor shall I deny that each of them has some reason to refuse responsibility for him. But, under this system, whenever the wrong man gets into power, it will be easy to know in every form and stage of democratic authority who is to blame. In all the larger areas of political life the RepresentativeElector alone will have to answer for the conduct of the public functionaries. Omnipotent as he clearly will be within his sphere, he will have no subterfuge from full Responsibility.

Surely the higher public service under these conditions will be permeated by a sterner sense of accountableness than has yet pervaded government in any age or country,—to its great purification and advancement beyond a doubt.

This strong settlement of Responsibility will by no means involve democracy in subjugation to seated office. From the lot-drawn Caucus of the people up to the highest grade of the Electoral Convention and down through every department of political administration, public opinion, however varying, will still maintain a sure supremacy; for the Colleges of Electors will not only be chosen afresh at defined periods, but will all the while be liable to renovation at the will of their constituencies.

(*n.*) *The Representative Elector a Watchman.*

This attitude of the Elector will devolve upon him a duty of great significance, now unassigned. It will belong specifically to him, as it did to the Roman Consul, to take care " lest the republic should suffer harm." At present this is nobody's business in particular; and, by consequence, nobody attends to it much.

(*o.*) *The Colleges of Representative Electors a Balance wheel of Political Movement.*

Our present system, whether in its two houses of legislation, its veto power, its tripartite distribution of political function among the makers, the judges and the executors of the law, or anywhere else, furnishes no true regulator of democratic career. Despite these devices the wheels of political movement roll sometimes too fast, and sometimes too slow, sometimes backward and sometimes forward, nor follow any settled track. This defect, it is believed, is here supplied by the authoritative station of the Representative Elector. To him, a fair and full representative of social interest, sentiment and influence, reform can confidently address its claims for due advancement, and conservation for just protection. While prevalent opinion will be fully accommodated, and all proper flexibility of laws and institutions ensured, this removed authority will stand like a rock against wanton and hasty change.

(*p.*) *This System of Elections Simple.*

Finally, this method of democracy is supremely simple. Fairly to compare it in this respect with what we now live under, we must remember that the latter virtually comprises not only all the variety of election proceedings and methods of appointment that are known to the Constitution and the statute book, but also the preliminary work of the Caucus and Convention, and of all the rest of the machinery and methods of Political Organization.

Tiers Etat.

It was well remarked by Dugald Stewart in his life of Adam Smith, when defending the claims of that philosopher to originality, that "in proportion as any conclusion approaches the truth the number of previous approximations to it may reasonably be expected to be multiplied." Accordingly, the history of government, from the various ingenuities of Greece and Venice to the latest constitutions of France, Roumania and Brazil, abounds in approximations to this system. To recount any considerable share of them would be a tedious task. But there is one that comprises so many of the features of my plan as to deserve especial notice;—the more, because it was approved by its works, and thus furnishes for the scheme to some extent the argument of actual success.

The best display, beyond a doubt, that political society in its larger spheres has ever made was in the Third Estate of France, which assembled at Versailles on the first of March, 1789, and which, the Estates of the nobility and clergy refusing co-operation, became the celebrated national assembly. Says Alison, who was a most unwilling witness to any virtue or success of democracy: "Among its members it numbered a great proportion of the talent and almost all the energy of France." All the testimony of observers, together with the verdict of subsequent inquiry, is to the same effect.

But its recorded works are its sufficient eulogy. It does not belong here to discuss the inexhaustible theme of the French Revolution, but I fear no contradiction when I say that for patriotism, purity, understanding, moderation, magnanimity, and every other virtue that should characterize public bodies the French Constituent Assembly of 1789 is entitled to the palm. It was foremost in its temper, foremost in its prudence, and foremost in its success. Remember its provocations, remember the chaos and difficulty of the times, remember the old oppressions that it broke up, and the liberty, equality and fraternity that it inaugurated, and tell me who has done better, or who has done so well. It made but two material mistakes: the first in forbidding to its members a second candidacy, and the other in utterly changing for its successor the manner of its own election. But for these two errors, and especially the last, the horrid and disastrous scenes that are apt to be alone associated by ignorant people with the French Revolution, would never have happened.

When we consider how suddenly this body was called together, and how well they discharged their arduous and unaccustomed task; when we compare their solid discourse, as preserved in the chronicles of the times, with the vapidity that spreads through legislative halls in general; and when we remember that what they did and said is still the study, the example and the inspiration of popular endeavor all over Europe, we may well inquire how it was that such a prodigy was brought into existence. How came it that a people, utterly inexperienced for more than two centuries in political function, should choose, at the first attempt, the best men among them for their political representatives? The answer is, that *the members of the Third Estate were elected substantially after the manner here proposed* for all high functionaries: that is, not by the people themselves, nor by their immediate representatives, but *by the representatives of those representatives.*

This fact, so full of instruction, is omitted or slurred over by Alison, Thiers, and all the other formal historians that I have access to, but it is clearly indicated by Carlyle in the first chapter of the fourth book of his French Revolution, and is fully described by Messrs. Erckmann-Chatrian, in "The Story of a Peasant," (Vol. I, p. 135, et seq., Beeton's Library Edition,) where will be found the very proclamation of the king that called this body together and ordered the manner of its election. The document is too long to be transcribed here, and in some particulars its meaning, as translated, is somewhat obscure; but this much pertinent to my purpose can be clearly gathered from it, viz.: (1) That the voters of each parish and community were to meet at the "guild hall" and elect deputies who should constitute "the assembly of the third estate" of the town: (2) that this body should appoint deputies, at the rate of "one for every hundred houses," to represent it at the convention of the "principal bailiwick;" which, in turn, (3) was to send a fourth part of its number to "represent it at Paris."

Commenting on that compound system of representation, and seasoning entertainment with instruction, as is their wont, these charming authors remark that "it will be observed that instead of naming, as we do now, deputies of whom we knew nothing * * * we chose, as was sensible, from one's own village. * * * Those persons then selected the most sensible, the most able, the boldest and best educated to sustain our appeals to the king, the princes, the nobles and the bishops. In this fashion we had what was good. Look at what our deputies did in '89, and what these do to-day; then you will see whether it was better to have folks who were chosen because they were known, or men whom you elect because the prefect recommends them to you." Substitute in the last sentence "politician" for "prefect," *et de te fabula narratur.* On a subsequent page these writers, as if to anticipate another feature of this system, advise that electors should have it in their power instantly to deprive of his seat every deputy who might prove false to his trust.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS SYSTEM THE TRUE SCIENCE OF POLITICAL SOCIETY.

THUS this system pretends to do little more than to gather and employ the scattered members of ancient political truth. But it is claimed for it, not only that its several parts are sound, but that their combination is philosophical. If that be so, a thousand analogies will confirm its methods, and its use will be attended, not by stray and transient advantages merely, but by a perpetual accompaniment of beneficence. To survey it a moment in this broad regard may help to strengthen the basis of particular deduction.

(1) *It makes Actual the rule of The People.*

That democracy is the government which nature designs can hardly be doubted. Without speculative argumentation, it is sufficient to remember that throughout history it has been in point of fact the general instinctive endeavor of all the nobler races, and, especially, that in the supreme Caucasian family the current toward it has constantly gathered strength in a marked degree ever since the art of printing arrived to inform and aid the common mind. If modern civilization be anything but a phantom it surely carries universal democracy within its womb. Even through the dirt-beclouded scarf-skin of present American politics may still be discerned the native loveliness of popular sovereignty. The principle of democracy is like that royal tree which, though wrenched and bruised in many storms, still holds a steadfast root and lifts its branching plumes above all rivalry. To me all the sap of nature seems ready to rush to its trunk whenever its swelling virtues shall be free to unfold themselves.

But democracy does not mean merely the equality of men in political rights before the law, but their actual political empowerment also. Our present system, like many others, writes in the statute book that the will of the people is sovereign; but the actual fact is, that thus far in the history of the world no lasting command over their own affairs has ever been anywhere achieved by any large community. Often falling to them by chance, or seized upon by instinct, power has always been loosely held by them, and has soon slipped from their grasp into the hands of more concentrated and watchful talents. This happened repeatedly in Greece and Rome; it has happened more than once to France within a century; it has happened to nigh all the other nations of Europe since present memory; and it is fast happening to us, although we seem not to know it.

But under this system the people will not fail to hold their grip on the substance of authority. Let critics tell, if they are able, what defective point there is in the armor here provided for the public will where violence can break through, or fraud insinuate itself. If the people rule not well, they will at least rule.

(2) *A due Subordination in Political Society is here Established.*

But, supremely democratic as this system is, its limitation of direct popular function in all the wider spheres of government to the choice of a Representative Elector, in whose preferred integrity and wisdom all farther authority is reposed, brings in also the everlasting principle of Subordination. "Order is Heaven's first law;" and there is no order without subordination. Without it there is mutiny in armies, piracy on ship board and hell in families; and without it, equally, there is eternal warfare in political society. Deprived of this, democracy must forever imitate that derisive statue of it that Phidias cut,—a plenty of arms and legs, but no head.

It is one of the principal defects of our present system that it fails to make due account of the actual difference among men. It seems to intend, what never can and should not be, the equal rule of unequals. Democracy can never flourish on the mere enumeration of polls. The level that that would bring us to is a dead level. It must somehow contrive to measure its constituent members as well as count them.

This is believed to be effected by the method of establishing authority that is here proposed.

Only to him who thinks one man as good as another will this seem a disadvantageous change: but let such prig of philanthropy remember that, if he claims to be as good as anybody else, he must also confess to being as bad. The sentiment of the rightful equality of all men in political power is at best but a mixture of stupid self-conceit and blear-eyed sympathy. In the lack of any right guidance of public opinion it has of late been peculiarly effusive in this country. But a reaction has begun, and every thinking man would now be glad to see an honest mastery established, even though he himself should turn out to be a subject. Surely no believer in popular sovereignty can complain of a supremacy that the mass of the people are equally free to establish and to cast down, as they will be that of my Colleges of Representative Electors.

This law of Subordination, as belongs to its native virtuousness, was the first to raise its head in the organization of political society. "A person or set of persons," says Walter Bagehot, "must first be had to defer to, though who he is, by comparison, hardly signifies." Its import never ceases. Says Carlyle in this sense, with his usual pointedness of expression: "The ultimate question is: 'Can I kill you or can you kill me?'" To substitute peaceful adjustment for such severe criterion is the constant and still unsolved problem of civilization. It is expected to be accomplished here by the logical and systematic empowerment of the mightier—whether in wit, muscle or fortune—and the consequent quiet submission of the weaker elements in political society. The method is in accord with the primeval law of natural selection, alike in interests, ideas and persons, and is therefore a true ally of stability, peace and progress. Based on the eternal doctrine of equal rights, and yet giving free scope to every new influence, it will both establish what is strong in the present, and give quick announcement to every change in rightful power that time shall give birth to.

In point of fact, every government, in its inner knot, necessarily employs this principle. It is as impossible for political society to get along as a mere coöperation of equals as for a machine shop or a store. Moreover, it is as natural and necessary for the mass of men to be virtual subjects in politics as it is to be pupils and imitators in art, science, fashion and religion. The organization of an army is the oldest, and perhaps the final model, in no narrow sense, of regulated government. The most successful nationalities of our period are impregnate with this doctrine. In Great Britain every important movement, both in legislation and in administration, for conservation or reform, obeys a narrow Cabinet, if not the Prime Minister alone. So in Germany, Belgium, and Scandinavia. It is largely because neither the city, the State nor the nation has here a head that our democracy so straddles about and vainly swings its arms.

This law of Subordination, it is worthy of remark, is especially useful to the commonalty. Nature's magnates will always be able to take care of themselves, however government may be constituted, but the mass of men constantly need the protection, guidance and rule of superior intelligence and energy. At bottom the domestic brute is hardly more dependent on the interested care of a superior species. Accordingly, it is a familiar fact that nowhere else are the lower sort of folks so prosperous as when they stay long in the employ of extraordinary intelligence and force.

In contradiction to all this, our present system of elections makes the wise man theoretically, and most often in fact, of no more weight in the determination of affairs than the foolish man, the solid and reputable citizen than the pauper or the loafer, the constable than the thief, a Washington than the meanest man that crawls. Had our present plan of government no other defect, it could beget naught else but degraded policy and disordered career. Democracy can never do deeds worthy of itself until it is furnished a better guidance than the low understanding and vacillating will of the masses, which, under the existing system, are its lawful directors.

Our present volunteer party organizations, vicious as they are, do something toward the correction of this defect in the law. It is better far to trust the officering and polity of the state to the average convention of politicians, bad as they are, than to any mass meeting of the people at large, or to organized grangerdom or labor unions. I undertake to make that correction complete and compulsory by putting the immediate establishment of all high authority into the hands of a selected few, presumably qualified, if my argument has been sound, for such exalted function. Leadership, somehow arrived at, political society must have. Shall it still be the acquisition of conspiring self-seekers, as it is here now, or shall it be the bestowal of the people? This is the practical question between our existing system of government and that which is here proposed.

(*c*.) *Democracy, Oligarchy and Despotism Here Combined.*

This system collects together the special merits of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Republicanism, each of which principles of government, by credit of its antiquity and still continuing force, has surely good claim to consideration. To each of them certain particular virtues have been customarily ascribed. As summarized by Montesquieu, to the first belongs vigor, to the second intelligence, and to the last purity of purpose. The might of kings and the wisdom of princes have passed into proverb, nor will any but the pessimist or the misanthrope deny the general good intentions of the people. For this assignment of merit there is certainly this much of foundation, that government to be powerful must be concentered, to be wise must employ the superior talents of the few, and to be just must make the general welfare its cynosure,—which last democracy alone can be expected to do. Each of these political forms has its acknowledged vices also. The monarch, owning no responsibility or restraint, becomes an oppressor; in aristocracies flourish dark intrigue and cruel pride; while the popular mind tends to fanaticism, contention and discontent. Left to itself, each of these principles has shown far more of its vicious than its virtuous side. To correct the mischievous tendency of one by the companionship of the rest has from time immemorial been the study of philosophy and patriotism. "That is the best constituted government," says Cicero, "which is composed of the three original elements, the royal, the aristocratic, and the democratic." Says Tacitus: "all nations must be governed either by the people, the first men, or a single ruler:" adding that, "a form of government constituted of these three, it is easier to admire than to believe possible." Every student of political history is compelled to admit the native force of each of these elements; nor can he either hope or wish to stint it of its due prerogative. But, thus far, no other than fortuitous or illogical mixtures of them have been arrived at. Whenever they have been brought together, they have stood on no common basis, have been diversely inspired, and, consequently, have lived in constant antagonism.

This ancient problem is here solved, and this vital need supplied. No virtue of the common people will be sacrificed, superior talent will have all possible recognition and opportunity, and the dominion of the state will be single, quick and absolute. Liberty will go hand in hand with law, and power with knowledge. The people will both rule and obey; and the genius which has heretofore so often used them as tools will itself become their honored engine.

(*d.*) *The seeming Complexity, and the Moderation of this System are of Nature.*

A thousand analogies guarantee the virtue of this mixed and graduated method of political construction. It is that repeated sifting which separates minutely the greater from the less, or like those successive distillations which gradually collect the pure from the impure. It is the multiplication of social purpose into itself. It is such purification and metamorphosis of the raw material of humanity as alone can bring its hidden virtues into light and use. Never are nature's staples—the floss of cotton, the ores of iron or the juices of the cane—of any worth till they have been cleansed, corrected and condensed. This is what this system does for crude democratic will. It does more: it constantly tests and modifies its outcome by the intermixture and reagency of picked intelligence. Hence may results unknown before, and nigh incredible, be safely expected. For though the thoughts and aspirations of the mass of mankind are far removed from the high duties and difficult interests of wide political society, they embody, nevertheless, the elements out of which a vital chemistry can form the richest fruits:—so does Behemoth on the banks of Nile educe from reedy crudeness in slow digestion his sinewy virtues; so from the leaching of an acrid and limy soil flow the sweet products of the joyful vine; so does the oak, feeding upon the cold and naked juices of the ground, gather therefrom, as they course through its knotted joints, those virtuous combinations that at length beget alike the iron strength that braces its arms and the tufted beauty that crowns its top.

Moreover, the hindrance and delay to which I here subject popular movement is in strict conformity to natural laws. Nowhere, in her favorable moods, does nature work by sudden onset or quick construction. Where she does best she moves slowest. Not hot beds nor volcanoes, but the slow warmth of the approaching sun, figure her beneficence. That moderation is imitated here.

When our political life shall be regulated after this manner that is here proposed, it will imitate those fair rivers which of yore among the Alleghanies gathered their waters from the filtering bosoms of primeval forests, and poured them along with steady flow, as pure as Arethusa's fountains, refreshing and fertilizing all around throughout their destined course. But how are these streams now changed! The steadying influence that nature had devised among her tangled symmetry of trees and ferns, her heaped up leaves and rush-grown intervales, has been torn away by ruthless art, and flood and drouth alternate. Destructive violence follows muddy stagnation, and nature is at war with herself. Meantime, from all sides are poured into these once pure and healthful currents the poisonous and staining refuse of a thousand chemic arts, mixed with the sewage and souring waste of pent-up populations.

How like to these are the phenomena of our present political life! A false system of elections, prompting the gainful industry of politicians, has taken from democratic will all natural behavior. From time to time, driven by party stress or sudden impulse, it rushes with headlong and destructive vehemence along a shifting channel, and stagnates when the flood is spent. Meanwhile its course is thick-bordered with the structures of unscrupulous political self-seeking, whence are poured into it from all sides the turbid waters of public corruption. If we would mend this, we must invoke nature's guidance, and imitate her processes. The purposes of the people must be held back and steadied in their course, until at length, unstirred and undirtied by the delving of the politician, they shall grow to the proportions of enlightened public opinion, and strongly mingle with the tides of time.

(*e*.) *Every Political Potency will here be duly Represented.*

In this construction of political society every native influence will have full scope, will be weighed in a just balance, and will take its lawful place. Nothing human will be foreign here, either in the consultation of the people, or the selected Colleges of Electors; and the result can but accord with the wide eternal fitness of things. Society is naturally shaped and moved by a great variety of forces,—by numbers and character, muscle and money, possession and expectation, prestige, audacity, and toil, selfishness, sympathy, intelligence, emotion, learning, instinct—and whatever other power or quality resides in human kind. That system of government alone which gives effect to all these falls in with nature's plan. The political methods of the past have used some salient element or elements among them only, like the canvas of Rembrandt,—now making personality darken every other feature, as in tyrannies; now inheritance, and now brute numbers; sometimes occupation, as in old Egypt; caste, as in India; money, as in the municipal constructions of mediæval Europe; superstition, as in Jewry and Utah; or literary skill, as in China. Like the partial depictions of that artist, too, these methods may produce some startling results, but nothing that fills the measure of nature.

No single force can ever successfully manage society. As says Lord Bacon: "When any of the four pillars of government are mainly shaken," (which according to him are religion, justice, counsel, and treasure), "men had need pray for fair weather." The combination of many potencies is the secret of political success—as from the mixture of various metals came the resisting armor and conquering weapons of ancient war. It was well said, that, had Comte succeeded in making philosophy our worship, he would have been burnt at the stake by his own priesthood. He saw not that the intellectual, the emotional and the physical are a trinity of social power, whose disunion must ever breed commotion, conflict and disaster, but whose full harmonious conjunction and coöperation promise untold beneficence. The history of nations tells us in a thousand catastrophes that it is hazardous to scant of due regard any of nature's various forces in the construction of political society. How often, watching too closely some single supposed celestial guide,—right, law, reason, philanthropy or religion,—has high purpose been wrecked upon the rough environment of mixed humanity!

It is the chief excellence of the British constitution that it employs a greater number of the native elements of political strength than any other ever has. Hamilton predicted, with the deep insight of genius, that our present system, based as it is chiefly on a mere count of voices, to the neglect of character, talent and property, could never succeed.

Not only will all the various elements of political power be assembled and employed here, but they will also be put in proper adjustment. The right adjustment of energies is always necessary to their beneficence. Not till the touch of the loadstone, as philosophers tell us, has brought its particles into due polar arrangement, does the martial metal obey celestial influences, and become the safe guide of the wanderer. The common systems of government seem almost designed to favor the divergence and combat of nature's forces, rather than their harmonious coöperation: at least, they have effected but a mechanical mixture of them, or the casual coherence of propinquity, habit and prejudice. But here, it is believed, a better law will obtain. Discord, wasting collision and profitless turmoil will be avoided, or reduced to a minimum. All the elements of social force will be set in harmonious relation to each other, and each will assert its just prerogative, and bear its proper part in the settlement of political authority and career.—For, when persons shall have free opportunity, all the potencies that cling about them,—station, faculty or possession, pregnant of every minor thing,—will each discharge its proper function.

By these means it cannot but be reached, in the end, that the higher representatives of democracy here provided for will give shape, voice and effect to numerous exalted purposes of society that now lie disintegrated, expressionless and impotent. Great things, surely, may be expected from this just combination of all the forces of the public will. The deeds of democracy, it is true, can never surpass the spirit of democracy: but it is believed that the major sentiments of mankind are good. These will be gathered and crystallized here, while all inferior opposing forces will remain incoherent and sedimentary.

(*f.*) *Increased Influence of Personal Character and Property.*

In this fair contest two social potencies, it is believed, will be certain to find augmented influence. In the first place, personal character will be raised to its native throne. Of all forces high character is of least account in our present politics. It is in fact rejected by Political Organization as dangerous, or at least useless: and it repudiates politics in turn, as unrewardful, unbecoming and noisome. Consider how seldom your most esteemed neighbors and acquaintances arrive at public station, or seek it; and how few of them frequent the party caucus and convention, or do more at the polls than drop a silent vote! On the other hand, how characterless are the bulk of them that administer our affairs! But under this system the influences that bring about this sorry state will lose their sinister advantage. Both in the conference of the people where I cradle democracy, and in the Colleges of Electors where it confronts exalted public requirements, this chief stamp of worth will have increased opportunity, recognition and advancement.

To this not many will object: but the augmented influence of the property of the country, which is equally certain to ensue, will be apt to be less generally welcome. That that influence is now very small, the taxpayers of New York or any other city, or indeed of the country in general, will not ask to have argued. But the evil effects of the "spoils" doctrine, the growth of bribery at the polls and in every department of the public business, and the unlawful control that organized capital sometimes exercises over legislatures and common councils, have made public opinion distrustful of the money power as an element in politics. But all these are in fact but perversions of a native and beneficent influence, and are due to the falseness of our present methods of political construction. Nor is it really the hand of property that has there been seen. The real capital of the country meddles little with politics. It was not the moneyed men of

New Hampshire that decided there the important election of March, 1876; it was the purse of office, longer than the purse of opposition. It was not those who owned the Erie Railroad that so often debauched Albany and the courts, but the adventurers who wanted to own it, or at least to enjoy the profits of its use. Say what you will about the power of money, the cheapest dog that gets into the legislature can hurt Vanderbilt a thousand times more than Vanderbilt can hurt him; and they both know it.

Philosophically viewed, property is entitled to great weight in political affairs. It is not humanity alone that is valuable to humanity. No reasonable man would destroy railroads because of railroad slaughters, or shut up the wells of the Alleghanies because women and children are sometimes burned to death by kerosene. Politics is society taking care of society; and, logically, it regards the individual only as a member of the body politic. Every man is of infinite value to himself, but he is of no value to the commonwealth except as he profits it. He who consumes all that he earns is of no use to the community, and can therefore make no demand on political prudence; much less can he who consumes more than he earns. The fertile farm is of more value to society, and therefore should be of more consideration in philosophic politics, than the thriftless farmer, and the toiling mule than the vagabond ass who rides it.

Moreover, the science of government deals with long periods. Political society means the continuous embodiment and empowerment of common concerns generation after generation. Among these the material accumulations of the past are of no secondary account. They are an essential condition and chief help of human progress. Whoever would despoil property of great influence in human affairs would lead us fast back toward barbarism. Each generation inherits far more than it earns. What are the labors of to-day upon the land compared with the subjugation of wildernesses that our fathers have slowly wrought for us? Far better were it for the family of man that this generation were stricken out than that it should fail to pass to the next the material capital that it is heir to.

Philosophy can take a still deeper view. The law of the correlation and conservation of forces joins spiritual and material values in a profound identity. Soul and substance intermigrate. Clinton still lives in his canals, and Morse will not be dumb in death while continents endure to echo back and forth the voice of his invention.

Besides—to descend to meaner arguments—nothing else so holds a man to the considerate and earnest discharge of his political duties as to have a material stake in the country. The most concern that the majority have, or think they have, in government, is in what they have to pay for its support. The success of the British government has been due in no small part to the fact that property and political power have there commonly resided in the same hands. So, the general diffusion of property interests in this country is all that has kept the republic to any anchorage.

Do what we may, money will always have great influence in politics. Over half the civilized world, monarchies, aristocracies and republics rise and fall at the command of capital. In our own case money is at bottom the master of the Caucus and Convention, which are our masters. There is no power in fleeting idea or ephemeral personality to put down its long knitted strength. Self-preservation makes it pugnacious: if labor would maim it, it kicks labor in the belly; if office attack it, it unseats office; if the law be unfriendly, it can buy out the law.

My system will not fail to set this native potentate in its lawful seat. This is guaranteed in the Conference of the people, where I inaugurate political authority, by the dependence of employment and various other business interests on capital, by the respect that the possession of houses, farms and bonds will always command, and, on the other side, by the confidence of power that money gives. And whatever potency property may have in that popular field will surely remain in the College of Electors, to which station I advance entire every element of social force.

(*g.*) *A True Organization of Political Society.*

But this system boasts even a deeper reach of virtue. It claims to accomplish a veritable Organization of all the native forces of politics. and thus to endow political society with the advantages that the regulated and the vital have over the fortuitous and the mechanic. Surely neither monarchy nor oligarchy can hope to do this, but only democracy. Whether mankind be wise or foolish, benevolent or malicious, makes no odds: the problem of government is to put in power general human nature, such as it is; and this can be done only by Organizing all its various elements.

Organization is the finishing display of nature's powers and purposes. It is thereby that in vegetation a particle or two more or less of innocent carbon or hydrogen may make the difference between a poison and a nourishment. It wields the power in nature's laboratory that multiplication does in numbers,—accumulating each individual value upon all the rest. It is this alone that can inform grossness with a living and effective will. Without it the individual voter is but an idle particle floating impotent in chaos, like the unsorted and unsettled atom in chemistry; but, a participant there, he awakens to his strength, and gathers and sheds influence all around.

Always has political society flourished or decayed largely in proportion to the employment of this principle. At the present moment the peace of Europe has no guarantee whatever save a quasi *organization* of her potentates. The aid of this principle is constantly invoked in every social or political undertaking. Temperance, sectarianism, labor unions, grangerdom, free-soil, free trade, and every other public endeavor, are consciously vain without it. Said Governor Booth of California, in the flush of a popular triumph at the polls over railroads, but appreciating its casualness and insecurity: "We must have an Organization. Our victory is a mere phenomenon. There will be times of apathy which must be anticipated by Organization." The same, I noticed, was the burden of the speeches at a dinner given by distinguished "independents" to Mr. Carl Schurz at Delmonico's, April 26, 1875. So, Organization is instinctively attempted whenever an outraged and indignant public undertakes—always in vain—to overthrow its present lords. Until the people are Organized their purposes will forever wander, and their efforts be in vain. Here, indeed, is the great lack of democracy, from time immemorial. In no signification surely, can our present system be called an Organization. It is hardly more than a mere agglomeration of persons and influences. It may answer, like the colonial system of Rome, for the purposes of a census, a tax or a conscription, but never the purposes of a free political life. Naught but the helping hand of Political Organization in party forms now saves the public will from utter scatteredness and impotence. The methods of that spontaneous, mighty and expanding growth, now serving only self-seeking and fanaticism, are here undertaken to be employed to gather in the sentiments and secure the interests of the whole community. I propose little alteration of those methods except to make the Caucus and Convention, which are now nominally but a preliminary, the total procedure of democratic choice.

To find analogies between this mode of organizing political society and the familiar operations of nature is no false feat of ingenuity, but a true depiction; for, diverse as are her phenomena, her methods display throughout a profound identity. Everywhere she works by graded integration. In the vegetable world rootlets beget roots, and roots the trunk; and, in the human frame, a thousand fibrils join to form each fibre of the various chords of sense that gather in the brain to guide our footsteps. Each rank of nature's powers rules those above, and leans on those below, inspiring and inspired. Thus from variety harmony results, high things from mean, and from successive change a deep stability. These blessings democracy will not find till it possesses itself of nature's method of Organization.

By this means the spirit of society will arrive at an effectual unification, the commonwealth will be solidified, and public opinion, which is now a bubble, will become a crystal. The thoughts and aspirations of the age are at present but a mob, each struggling for precedence, and each impeding the rest,

> "With Chance chief arbiter,
> Who by admixture more embroils the fray."

But, under the freedom and just relations that are here established for every influence, our present confused and wavering aims will be replaced by nature's clear fixedness of intent. Heretofore our career has resembled the restless rushing to and fro of childhood, or even the spasmodic dance of St. Vitus, rather than the ordered and symmetric movement of maturity and health. For example, our legislatures are busied half the time in taking to pieces to-day the contrivances of yesterday, and nigh the other half in bringing out again toys once discarded. Few are the statutes that survive their authors. Their average duration is about three years.

By this means, too, the life of the State will achieve an organic continuity. Thus will each generation securely inherit the acquisitions of those that have gone before, strengthening constantly the foundations of a higher career;—so that, like to what happens in the successive ages of geology, each hour of politics will bring forth higher forms of social life, and better methods of political adjustment. At the present time, for lack of this advantage, the lessons of the past bear little fruit. "History repeats itself." Hardly any principle of legislation is not still in doubt. Forms and prejudices are about all that come down to us.

This fixation of political truth as the property of society is of the utmost importance. If chemic discovery and mechanic invention could get no better foothold than the new truths that Beccaria, Adam Smith and Alexander Hamilton taught, the power of the horse would remain the only horse-power, the semaphore our mode of telegraphy, and science still be hunting for the philosopher's stone.

Thus founded on truth, and entrenched in the deep nature of things, this system, wherever inaugurated, cannot break down of itself. External violence will be its only danger. In the Conference of the people it brings together, for fair contest or harmonious coöperation, all the forces of political society; in its Representative Electors it stations all about trusty guardians of the common weal; and, in its law of Office-tenure, provides a speedy correction for the misbehavior of every officer of the people. Scant opportunity, surely, will there be, in the presence of such safeguards, for the chance, audacity and secret fraud that have heretofore so constantly breached or undermined the defenses of popular government.

The conceit of some fantastic minds that a deeper reform of society than this, such as shall even rebuild the ancient and universal institutions of property and family, is needed, requires not here to be considered. These speculators are but like children who would break in pieces the choicest work of art, to build out of its fragments playhouses to suit their wayward fancy. It is only a better way of establishing political authority that society needs. Only against the present method of this has the American citizen a solid ground of much complaint.

CHAPTER VIII.

CORRECTIVE EFFECTS OF THIS SYSTEM.

THE high expectation of the happy working of this method of democratic construction which cannot but be raised by the foregoing account of its special features and its philosophy is made assurance when we consider certain corrections of our present evil state that will certainly attend its employment.

(*a*) *Elections Corrected.*

In the first place it will put a sudden end to all our election troubles,—to fraud in its various forms, to uncertainties, unnecessary and demoralizing expenditure, and to distracting turmoil.

(1) The ballot-box, traditional panoply of popular rights, has turned out to be a poor security against fraudulent elections. Since Political Organizations have come to supervise and certify the polls, the records of democratic will are no longer to be trusted. What with fraudulent naturalization and registration, personation, repeating and colonization, false counting, false returns and false records, together with unscrupulous partisan arbitrament in disputed cases, we are often obliged to doubt whether we are living under our lawful rulers, and even sometimes know that we are not. There is little question, for example, that in the State of New York not many years ago a governor and several members of the supreme court were "counted in,"—to use an idiom that the frequency of a crime till lately unknown to the country has made it necessary to invent. There is as little, by the confession of many Republicans themselves, that in at least two of the States at the last Presidential election the vote of the people was so manipulated as to make a majority out of a minority in the final returns. In February, 1873, a committee of the federal senate, a majority

of which, viz: Anthony, Logan, Carpenter and Trumbull, were partisans of the administration, unanimously reported, after a careful investigation at the place of the crime, that the returns of the Louisiana election of the year before were "fabricated" by the functionaries of the federal government. In the same State and in South Carolina at a later date (1877), the question who was elected governor was decided by the "policy" of the incoming president, without any legal inquiry or determination whatsoever.

(2) Mostly from this cheating, but partly also from the clumsiness of our election methods, comes frequent uncertainty in election results. In the forty-third Congress above twenty seats were contested in the House, and five in the Senate. This is a greater number of doubtful cases than the whole first half of our history presented. In Congress, State legislatures and city councils the public business is often at a standstill for weeks, the power of either party to move it being lacking in consequence of the number of disputed seats. In several of the Southern States since their reconstruction it has half the time been impossible to say who was the lawful governor. In many instances, as well North as South, each party has had its separate legislature or common council, and sometimes its separate polls. To settle these difficulties the bench is frequently called in, sometimes to its own demoralization, and injunctions, mandamuses and quo warrantos fly thickly about, Federal authority crossing swords with State, or party judges with each other, making confusion worse confounded.

These difficulties were not foreseen by the founders of our institutions. They intended that in every election the majority should rule, but they did not foresee that it would often come to be disputed on which side the majority might be. They directed that the President should give his support to State authority whenever that might be endangered, but they did not suppose that that authority would itself be sometimes in doubt. They undertook to guarantee republican government to all the States, but they did not imagine that in the same state two governments might both claim to be republican.

We had in the last Presidential election a warning of our danger from disputed elections that makes other instances almost superfluous, and that must fill every thoughtful patriot with apprehension. Only the memory of civil war then prevented civil war, and only by going outside of the constitution did we save the constitution. When such a trial shall again occur, of which there is every four years increasing danger, there will be no arbiter but the sword. Many ways have lately been suggested of mending the particular defect in our election system out of which this peril grew: but let tinkers beware lest they make the matter worse. They may be sure that no patching will answer, and that the difficulty will not be effectually remedied till the plan of elections here proposed is brought into use.

What with its promiscuous polling, its superintendence by the appointees of politics, its discretionary certification and its distant record, the present method of elections but furnishes invitation to the unscrupulousness of politicians, the recklessness of party, and the usurpations of office, and makes uncertainty certain. *But the system here set forth leaves no possible chance for fraudulent procedure or doubtful result.* It needs no argument to show that in the conference of the popular constituency for the choice of a Primary Representative Elector, democracy will be its own sufficient watch, ward, arbiter and recorder; and that in the public sessions and viva voce proceedings of the several Colleges of Electors, cheating and uncertainty of whatever sort will find no possible room. These advantages alone should suffice to ensure the adoption of this system.

(3) The expense of elections is getting to be no small item in the public charges. The election of November, 1874, cost the city of New York (under a *reformed* administration!) for registry, advertising, the rent, furnishing and repair of polling places, for ballot boxes and special police, for clerks, inspectors, and so on, above a quarter of a million of money. To choose, at a special election, a successor to outlawed Senator Genet, involved an expenditure, according to the New York Graphic, of a thousand dollars for each of the forty-two election districts into which the constituency was divided. It costs my own little city of four thousand voters about a dollar a vote each year to be in this way a tender to small self-seeking politicians in the distribution of offices. These are fair samples of what local

democracy, at least in cities, now has to pay to get itself superintended at the polls. To this is to be added what the federal government dispenses to marshals, commissioners, and so forth for overseeing the election of Congressmen and Presidential Electors, the cost of election contests in legislatures and before courts,—and I know not how much else. In the whole, and on the average, each taxpayer pays not less than the value of a day's work every year for the watching and verification of elections,—and by no means gets the business well done after all.

With the debauchment of our politics this outlay constantly swells. A clerk or an inspector of elections used to be paid a dollar or two: now this acolyte of politics gets ten times as much. It has become quite an object for the ward politician to rent a room for a registration or polling place,—and to get it afterwards put in better repair than it was before at the public cost. To supply fuel to warm the fingers of canvassers, or kerosene to illuminate their long deliberations, is a familiar item among the smaller profits of politics.

Of this expenditure not one-tenth part, it is obvious, will be needed, or can find any opportunity, under the system of elections here proposed.

A like saving will there be of the people's time. To say nothing of the vital business of attending preliminary Caucuses, I now have to go to the polls three times every year, viz: at the November State election, at the March municipal election, and at the June school election. But when this system is got well running I shall be called on to go there but once in several years.

(4) Under this system the miserable turmoil that now precedes and accompanies elections will be put an end to, and democracy will work out its destiny in the utmost quietness and peace. The political campaign is now a scene of tempest and tumult, where the natural face of things is changed, and whatever integrity belongs to popular purpose is broken up as in a cataract. The guidance of common sense and justice is lost in the blaze of party lights and the excitement of personal rivalries and attachments. Prejudices are strengthened, and pugnacity kindled anew. Solid repute vanishes like smoke, while false grows like gourd. Industry and business are inter-

rupted, while idleness, dissipation and disorder hold a muster. Not seldom election-day has proved a day of violence and riot.

But nothing of any such sort, it is evident, will ever attend the expression of democratic will after the methods here proposed.

(*b*) *Purification of the Polls from the Refuse of Society.*

But I expect from the employment of this system an improvement in elections more important even than the good that will come from the correction of their present fraudulence, uncertainty, expensiveness and turbulence. I look to see the polls cleared from the attendance of that large class of voters who now come there from no good motive, but whose ballots weigh as much as ours. The thousands of ignorant foreigners who are naturalized and brought to the polls at the expense and instigation, and for the use of parties and politicians; the thousands who come there to sell their votes; the hundreds of thousands who have no stake in public affairs, and feel no intelligent interest in them, but who are moved in their political action by party prejudice, religious or class bigotry, excitement, personal ill will or good will, or other illegitimate influences—all these, in a brief period, will voluntarily disappear from this arena, lacking inducement to attend there, and be dropped from the register of voters; and the government of the country will be left to the honest, the intelligent and the interested, with whom it belongs. This class, on the other hand, will come to this reformed and purified Caucus in full force, because now for the first time both their votes and their influence will have due weight. Thus will democracy be raised even above itself.

(*c*) *Political Organization will not long survive the introduction of this System.*

The Caucus will be powerless, the Convention a superfluity, the Committee's occupation will be gone. I turn upon the usurper his own guns, manned, not by a party, but by the whole people.

With Political Organization

(*d*) *Politicians,*

its ministers and beneficiaries, such as we know them now, will disappear from the stage. The major purposes of democracy will be fully gathered and empowered by the very operation of this system; and the people, no longer requiring the aid of these managers, will no longer submit to their guidance.

(*e*) *Office-seeking will be Restored to Decency.*

An ambition for the honor, influence, or even the profits of public life is not an unworthy motive. But private pursuit should wait on public request. He who would have an upper seat at the table of democracy should attend the motions of the master of the feast. This was once the prevailing custom in our politics; but it is quite the other way now. What is worse, office is hardly ever sought except for the money that it will bring, *per fas aut nefas.* The "place-hunting" that brought such ignominy on British politics a century ago is now the chief spur of ours. It is the first-born of Political Organization, still feeds at its breast, and will perish with it.

(*f*) *An End will be put to Corruption at the Polls.*

These sinister influences got rid of, purity will not fail to return to the ballot box. Venality there has now spread from one end of the land to the other, and through nigh every grade of society. Said the New London (Conn.) *Telegram*, a reputable paper, commenting on the State election of 1874 in that town: "Among those who unblushingly sold themselves for a few dollars were young men connected with respectable families, and educated at the High School." It is credibly reported that at the spring election in New Hampshire in 1876, which it was known that a few hundred votes would decide, and which was contested with unusual warmth by politicians, as being both indicative and influential with regard to the result of the ensuing Presidential campaign, many a man sold his vote for enough to support him for a year. A fine centennial change this way of getting a living from the fashion of John Stark and Ebenezer Webster! This in New England, famed for democratic virtue! But who will buy the voter in my Conference of the people?

But an evil deeper and more ancient than any of these will be reached and corrected by the operation of this system, for, under its influence,

(*g*) *Parties and Party Spirit will fast Perish away.*

So constant a companion of free society has the evil genius of Party been that the mere student of history will laugh at the promise to exorcise it. It is argued, too, that parties are a necessity. But everything that is is a necessity under the existing conditions. In this sense the fungous and eating cancer is as necessary as the healthy tissues that it invades. So, parties, I admit, are an inevitable accompaniment of democracy as now constructed: but I deny that they are of its essence, and I claim that by the operation of this system they will be speedily cast out among the rubbish of the past. That differences of opinion on public questions will forever continue, and personal mastery be contended for, and that, at some critical moments in the life of communities, adverse flags will still be flung out, is by no means doubted: but it is believed that such continuous division of the people into opposing political camps as we now constantly witness will not long survive the application of this method of democracy.

Granted that in the earlier stages of political society, and while the fundamental questions of right and power were still unsettled; that in Great Britain, where a steady conflict still obtains between reform and conservatism; that in France, where at the present moment (1877) a choice has to be made between diverse fundamental ideas of government; and that where race contends with race, nationality with nationality, or church with state, as now they do in many parts of Europe,—granted that in such cases party has a certain legitimacy, it can claim none whatever in this country at the present time. Here is no dispute about liberty, equality or nationality; nor conflict between conservatism and reform; the State does not meddle with religion, nor religion threaten the State. Under this serene sky the war of parties has no more just place than it has in science, art or literature, from whose enlightened schools it has long since been expelled.

Party is but a wry artificial distraction of democracy, and not its native symmetrical and harmonious shape. It is proof of this, that, when any vital matter comes in issue, the mass of a community almost invariably gather on one side. Thus, in our late sectional war, the body of the people, whether at the South or at the North, were of one mind with regard to its prosecution. Party spirit sunk as love of country rose. To claim the victory of the North in that conflict as a party triumph has no support in facts. Rather was it despite of party that the Union was saved. The most that parties can boast of is, that one of them precipitated the war, and the other delayed its conclusion.

It is the fashion to regard party contentions as the natural throes that democracy must endure while she brings her new beneficent conceptions into life. But there is nothing in the history of this country to warrant this idea. Not from party, but from individual efforts, sprang whatever has been creditable in our politics. It would not be easy to point out where policy or administration has got much advancement on a partisan issue. Save slavery and state rights, which in reality were never partisan, but sectional questions, all the great topics that have divided parties among us, such as free trade, internal improvements, and the fiscal question in its various aspects, are as unsettled now as they were fifty years ago. I know not what benefit party has brought us that would not have come without party. Not the forlorn habiliments of struggling truth, but the prevailing fashion, is what parties wear. They concern themselves about the new demonstrations of the hour only so far as they think they can profit by them. The law of party is to stand by party. Not what is right, but what is expedient, is its interrogation. In obedience to these rules, it welcomes selfishness and fanaticism to its court, while patriotic endeavor and high intelligence stand begging without the gates.

But it is said that parties are needed to watch and restrain each other. Their value in this respect, if they have any, is greatly overrated. Seldom has power been hindered by party opposition from carrying out its extremest purposes. On the contrary, party most often excites party to new excesses. Party furnishes neither much safeguard of public counsels nor check on public vice. Its spirit was high in this country along before the civil war; but it was not in closely contested states, like New York, Louisiana and Pennsylvania, where the watchfulness of party would naturally be most eager, that government was wisest and purest, but in South Carolina, Vermont, Massachusetts and Virginia, where the domination of the Whig or of the Democratic party was year after year substantially undisputed. Municipal politics, on a wide survey, would tell about the same story. The chief reason of this is, that when one party easily has its way, Political Organization, which is the main stem of public vices, is little needed by the major, and is of no avail to the minor party. Besides, when party contest is close, party spirit runs high, and official crimes and shortcomings are condoned and winked at, if not approved of, even by men of decency.

But, if party watching is needed, who shall watch the watchmen? The watch is now leagued with the thieves. Recent revelations have abundantly shown that Democratic and Republican politicians hunt in couples, and amicably divide between them the conquered quarry. Ostentatiously disputing in public, the managers of parties fraternize in a secret guild. The stolen profits of the Credit Mobilier operation were traced in about equal proportion to the pockets of Democrats and Republicans.

The fact is, that about the only watch upon the conduct of public functionaries that is now of any effect, is what is exercised over each other by rivals within the party of administration itself. Here scrutiny has its best opportunity, accusation a hearing, and competition some fairness of field. Add, that it is so much the custom of opposing partisans to lie about each other that a just complaint from a party opponent receives little more attention or credence among the people themselves than a false.

I concede to party in this country, at the present time, the single merit of impeding the influence of seated office, which, without this hindrance, must soon become able to re-elect itself.

But, while the reputed benefits of party are almost wholly imaginary, its injuries are solid. It is the ancient marplot of popular counsels, the family quarrel of free government, continually distracting what should be united, and retarding, afflicting and debauching the whole career of democracy. It is the father of unjust prejudice and false reports, of soured neighborhood intercourse, and even of persecution and civil war, with all their horrid train. By the obligation of dependence and the sympathy of fellowship it leads public men to keep an unpatriotic faith, since to be created by party is to be the creature of party. It is the grand conspirator against political truth, for, to the partisan, the fair consideration of public questions is already foreclosed. Of what infinite service would it be to the home interests of all our States and cities if the national partisanship which now so distracts the public mind in all elections could be got rid of! Nine voters out of ten notoriously are more governed in local elections by the party politics of a candidate than by any question of his fitness to manage local interests.

Nevertheless, at the beck of this spurious potentate not only are public functionaries established, but public policy is shaped. We had startling evidence how it still presides over our greatest deliberations when, lately, a Commission of higher selection than any known to laws and constitutions was set to decide the Presidency, and divided in their vote on a straight party line,—a result that there were thousands of chances against if the influence of partisanship had been excluded from the case. At Washington, in State capitals, and in city halls, it is not the majority of the whole representation of the people, but the majority of the dominant party, assembled in caucus, that customarily decides every important public question. Congress in the Presidential year is now notoriously occupied with making party capital. In the same interest States are shamelessly Gerrymandered, and desert territories converted into states. Not seldom the rivalry of parties brings the public business to a stand still, and it goes on only when spurred by a new force of corruption.

Whatever virtues party may claim perish with the triumph of party. "No party," said Mr. John Bright, "can be economical when in power." Neither can it remain incorrupt. Witness the rot of virtue in the Democratic party between Jackson and Buchanan; and its still swifter decay in the Republican party, which, born so lately of a virtuous sentiment, is seen already infected with every political vice. The best account that can be given of party since the war is as a contest between a fading fanaticism and a reviving Tammany, each side still grafting upon its own the vices of the other.

On the whole, it is logical to believe that no solution of our present quandary will prove good unless it clears the field of politics from party strife. That this can any way be done will naturally be doubted. An element with which all democratic society throughout history has been permeated may well seem essential and ineradicable. But the past does not always prefigure the future. Jupiter and all his satellites fell down before a greater God.

Whether this system will have the force to put an end to parties will depend, (1) on how solid is their basis; (2) on the strength of the hold they have on the affections of the people; and (3) on the virtue of the plan itself as a counter-action of the false influences that are now the chief support of party spirit and party organization.

(1) To make a sufficient ground for the division of democracy into two parties, some principle or measure of overwhelming significance must be at stake. But certainly there is nothing of that sort here now. On the contrary, some dozens of questions of nigh equal seriousness, but each governed by a different law, are in dispute in the several fields of government; and, logically, there should be as many party divisions, instead of but one. Certainly, neither hard money, protection, the railroad difficulties, sectarianism in schools, nor any other of the various matters before us at present, is of such supreme import as to merit alone to divide the country. Moreover, neither among Republicans nor Democrats is there unanimity on any of these topics. Accordingly, neither party takes decided ground on any of them, but makes its platform up of platitudes, generalities, *doubles entendres*, good professions and promises, and the easy indictment of the adversary.

A striking proof of the absurdity and dishonesty of the present party division may be seen in the fact that the question of the reconstruction of the South, which is by far the most important and disturbing issue that has lately entered into federal politics, has just been finally settled by a ***Republican administration on Democratic principles!***

Again, supposing parties to be suddenly dissolved, on what issue would they gather again? Obviously, they could gather on none. It used to be said that the Whig party had the best men, and the Democratic the best principles; but neither of our present parties has any principles at all, nor can it boast much of its men. Such a character as Calhoun, Webster, Wright or Benton, might well himself be the nucleus of a party; but this will hardly be claimed for anybody that is now prominent in politics.

(2) Party has no deep hold on the general mind. There is of late a great change in this respect. Said a veteran politician of note: "Forty years ago every man voted with his party: 'split tickets' and 'pasters' were unknown." It is not so now. The great majority of us, as has already been remarked, care little for politics, except to have the public business well conducted, and are conscious of a far deeper interest in local and non-partisan than in national issues. We stay inside of party, simply because our votes will count for nothing outside. The most that intelligent patriotism now hopes from one party is to defend it from the other. We assemble ourselves under the Republican or the Democratic flag, as in mediæval Europe the peasantry huddled beneath the shelter of baronial castles, not from love, but for security against a worse oppressor. Only for some inferior minds does party still remain a chain of superstition, cast about their necks by a political priesthood, who use in aid of their selfish purposes the contentiousness of human nature, every real or imagined diversity of interests, and a hell-full of lies.

(3) Finally, if party among us have so feeble a foothold, as well in popular favor as in reason, it should not be deemed to be a necessary feature of democracy, nor inexpugnable to human device. This plan undertakes to reduce its ancient hold by seizing upon a more commanding site, and garrisoning it with a mightier power. The assiduous cultivation by politicians of some minor divergences of popular opinion will fail of fruit when their art shall be confronted, as it will be under this plan, by the spontaneous and ready empowerment of general public sentiment.

Recall, in this regard, that under this system the pedigree of politics takes its start in an assembly of neighborhood voters for the purpose of choosing a neighbor to take virtual charge of all their various political interests, municipal, county, State and national. Surely, these will not allow the distant issues of the federal capital alone to array one half of them against the other, to the neglect of questions far more important to them that lie nearer home. Common sense, and the necessities of the situation, will force us to vote for the man who will best represent us in our general views, feelings and interests. This the more, because our ballots will not tell directly, as they do now, on the result of a party struggle. In this arena compromise will be felt to be necessary, and the spirit of conciliation be encouraged. Often the worst quarrellers agree when brought face to face before their acquaintances.

As little will party trouble the subsequent stages of this procedure. What is refused at the root can never appear in the branch. The College of Representative Electors is but an embodiment and higher expression of the general will. When partisanship shall disappear from the concourse of the people, it will no longer be seen in the wider fields of public authority. If this jack-o-lantern shall cease to mislead the average voter, we surely need not fear that it will continue to delude his selected representatives.

When Parties and Political Organization are put an end to

(*h.*) *The Influence of Office will be Abated;*

for it will have no flag, no means of concentration, and no allies.

By the same means the growing tendency to

(*i.*) *Centralization will be Arrested.*

It is in the interest of parties and politicians alone that city halls are now dictated to from State capitols, and that State capitols revolve about the White House, threatening to convert our democracy into a satrapy.

Party Organization has begotten in this country a deeper Centralization of political power than is written in constitutions or statutes. All our history shows that it is impossible to keep up one set of parties on municipal questions, another on State and another on national. The last always overshadows the others, and makes foreign and irrelevant matters the sole cynosure of popular regard in every local election.

Thus, in a very pregnant signification, we no longer have local government for local purposes. The form of it remains, but it is inspired from Washington. How the strength of the national party that he belongs to, or his favor with that party, will be affected, constantly more influences the course of the local functionary than do the interests of the locality itself. This, at least, is a Centralization whose ill effects opinion cannot differ about, and which only this system of elections can eliminate from our politics.

(*j*) *"Rotation in Office" will be Corrected.*

This feature of our politics is such a novelty in the world that only a recent American idiom furnishes a formula for its expression. Never in any other country, nor here till lately, has the charge of public affairs, both high and low, been periodically passed round like the deal at cards, as if to give each gamester of politics an equal chance. This custom began under Andrew Jackson, who, observing that the actual working of our system did not equal expectation, attributed the failure to a supposed tendency of office to debauch its holder, and proposed to purify the public service by a frequent sweeping-out. The suggestion looked plausible to the people, and lovely to place-hunters; and "rotation in office" rapidly became a prime incentive, instrument and watchword of Political Organization. It has now become the settled custom, not only in federal, but in State and more local politics; and, not only between parties, but between factions, cliques, neighborhoods, conflicting interests and personal rivalries within the party, each of them demanding its turn of official power, profit and distinction.

Out of the twenty-five federal senators whose terms expired on the fourth of March, 1875, but four were returned again. The legislature of Vermont in 1873 contained but thirty out of two hundred and sixty members, who had ever seen the State capitol before. But one of the present members of the common council of the City of Oswego was sitting there three years ago. The proportion is about the same in other legislative bodies all over the country. So, we have a new governor and a new mayor every year or two. The charge of the navy, of the public purse, of streets, prisons, and every other great public interest, is constantly handed over to novices and experimenters. Even the bench is falling into the same category in many cases.

Thus, when by chance a man of qualification gets on the public stage, his part is almost certain to be taken from him before he has had time to become familiar with it, before practice has ripened his skill, or the audience of the people learned to appreciate it. Or, if he stay there long, his efforts are constantly thwarted by surrounding ignorance, his abilities find scanty appreciation, and his just influence must be constantly rebuilt among the raw colleagues that rotation in office brings about him at every election. Poor career, surely, is there here for statesmanship, reward to industry, stimulus to noble motives, or warning against mean. Hardly anything has helped more than this to let down the charge of the commonwealth into unworthy hands, and make the public service a derision.

The absurdity and wrongfulness of this usage of our politics are past expression. Imagine a bank changing its cashier, tellers and book-keepers every year or two, as we do controllers, auditors and other high treasury officials; or a railroad or manufacturing corporation appointing a new superintendent at each meeting of its stockholders; or the captain of a ship being taken from the forecastle at every voyage. What can be more shameful to democracy than that the dower of the widow and the heritage of the orphan should be handed about among the young lawyers of the county, as they now are in this State, till each has had his opportunity and his party reward? or what more damaging than that the difficult business of the lawmaker should be constantly entrusted to hands untrained and untried? How far and wide the bad consequences of this folly reach, what waste, injustice, disaster and profitless turmoil it breeds, how it hinders the correction of political evils, and maims democracy in its native faculty of progress, the world will never know, nor can common minds even imagine, until stability and experience shall lend their neglected virtues to public administration, and make a contrast.

Every feature of my system of democratic construction is at war with this foolish and injurious rule. It is self-seeking

Politicians, making use of Party zeal among the people, of which they themselves are the interested and principal promoters, and dividing the spoils that Organized combination alone enables them to secure, that bring about this constant and injurious change of legislators, executives and judges : and, with the disappearance of Party, Political Organizations and Politicians, this evil progeny of theirs will also disappear. Among the mass of the community there can be neither inducement nor desire for any change of public functionaries without cause ; and, when democracy is truly empowered, these may safely expect to stay in their places until they have forfeited the public confidence.

Meantime, there will be no impediment to change of office-holders. At present, not only are men turned out of office who ought to stay in, but those stay in who ought to be turned out ; but, under the plan of Office-Tenure here proposed, the public service will free itself from day to day of each unworthy member.

(*k*) *The Public Mind will be Saved from Great Waste of Occupation and Energy.*

The amount of time and thought that the people now bestow on public matters is indicated by the fact that their principal reading is the newspapers, of which about half the contents are political and partisan. Old religious enterprises, like the New York Observer, find it profitable to divide their columns between politics and piety. It would not be easy to find a mechanic, farmer or professional man who studies the literature of his profession as closely as the literature of politics, though all his assiduity seldom enables him either to understand the business, or to acquire a real share in the management of it.

The plan of elections here proposed does away with all this waste. It asks of the voter no more than what he is capable of doing well, without harassment or undue occupation. In this natural construction of political society there will be no more occasion for him to worry himself about who shall be the next President, than about who shall succeed Brigham Young ; about what shall be done with criminals and paupers, than about who shall marry all the red-haired girls; about a sound currency, than about a supply of sweet flour in the market. The business of politics will do itself, and the general mind be set free to more profitable studies.

(*l*) *The Press Reformed.*

On the introduction of this plan will ensue great elevation and purification of the Newspaper Press. Far beyond schools and books, the newspaper is the instructor of the people. Without it, the mass of them would remain to-day nearly as deep in ignorance and superstition as they were two centuries ago. But, with all its benefits, the press is still somewhat *feræ naturæ*, turning often upon democracy to wound it, and even inflicting a terrible madness. Through its pretended sympathy with strikers it was chiefly to blame for the disastrous lawlessness that spread over the country last summer. As a party organ and the hired servant of politicians, which it now so largely is, there is no wrong that it may not be brought to defend, nor any righteous cause that it will not shamelessly forsake. It debauches its very debauchers, and parties and politicians themselves are often the worse for its communion.

But under the system here set forth who will buy its influence? or what profit will it find in lies? It will no longer be partisan when parties are abolished, nor the tool of politicians, when politicians are no more. Then will it serve a better cause. The evil practices that it now follows are foreign and unwelcome to its native strain. It owns a higher instinct than to be the organ of demagogues, the instrument of conspirators, the weapon of hatred or fanaticism, or a cowardly waiter on events; and, when it shall be released from its present false obligations and artificial necessities, it will start forward, like Pilgrim freed from his pack of sin, upon a higher path.

CHAPTER IX.

CREATIVE FORCES OF THIS SYSTEM.

BUT this plan of government is not a mere corrective, to purge from the body politic, like some homely medicine, infesting parasites and the morbidities that unwholesome surroundings have engendered there: it will also prove a fountain of positive good, an informing principle of truth, and the basis of a higher life. Claiming to be the method of nature, it claims also to possess all the beneficent fertility of nature. Endowing political society with the full possession of itself, it promises it the fruition of all its lawful hopes.

(*a*) *It will put the Right Man in the Right Place.*

Just in proportion as they accomplish this, are political institutions successful. Government must be administered by men, and "that which is best administered is best." Says Carlyle: "The finding of your able men is the business of all social procedure whatsoever." To have the right man in the right place is to have wisdom in law, justice in judgment, vigor in execution, and purity in them all.

It certainly will not be pretended that this object is generally accomplished in this country now. Says the critic of affairs just quoted: "The Yankee nation is now doing the worst work in this regard that I see anywhere." It is men of a trashy sort, for the most part, that fill our councils. Public sentiment, unhinged or infected by the prevailing spectacle, grows contented with the scantiest range of qualifications in its representatives; and when, by chance, we get a man who really does honor to his office, we are as much surprised and delighted as the urchin who, after many losing ventures, at last really finds a prize in his prize package. Nay, it sometimes looks as though democracy, like dwarfs, giants and other monsters, were beginning to pride itself upon its own deformities. The fanaticism of a party leader, the brutality of a war minister, the brazenness of an indicted senator, and the unwinking insensibility of a high executive, excite our admiration. We even are a little proud of Tweed.

This failure to put the right man in the right place is believed to have been here traced to its real source, and its logical correction to have been prepared. No longer, under this system, will the genius of democracy be either bewildered or hampered, and the fittest selection of public agents that human nature is capable of cannot but be habitually arrived at.

(*b*) *By the Prospect of this the Worthiest Citizens will be Attracted toward Public Life.*

To regulate society as the family is regulated by a wise head, to adjust its warring interests, to clear its path from weeds, rubbish and petrifactions, to stake out its future course, and to plant new seeds of civilization, prosperity and peace, is of all occupations the most attractive to high and virtuous ambition. Compared with it, the gathering of wealth is a mean pursuit, and all the employments of philosophy, literature and art a puerile. There are plenty of able, cultivated and virtuous men in this country who will be prompt to engage in public life whenever it shall be fairly opened to them. It is not so much "the coming man" that is lacking, as the door to let him in. "No where else," says a keen-sighted traveller, George Augustus Sala, "are so many men of shining talents, noble minds and refined tastes buried alive as in the United States." Nowhere else are the questions that concern the public welfare more assiduously studied, or the public interests more anxiously regarded.

But what inducement is there now for talent or patriotic spirit to enter the field of politics? In the company of fools wisdom is the supremest folly; and virtuousness, in the midst of knaves, works like a vice. Poor motive, surely, would there be for competition in schools if prizes were distributed there as favor and advancement are in our politics. Thus it is that the best class of men have nigh all cast out public ambition: but they will quickly yield again to its high seductions when by this system merit shall be reasonably sure of due encouragement and fair reward.

(*c*) *Then too will Spirited and Ingenuous Youth make Politics their Study and Ambition.*

This is a phenomenon that has always characterized the most successful epochs of free societies. In the best governed states of Europe at the present time young men of promise, impulse and opportunity make the public business their regular pursuit, just as they do engineering, farming or sculpture. The like devotion characterized this republic in its earlier career, constantly refreshing it with new life. But now it would be difficult to find a single ingenuous and instructed youth who proposes to find his occupation in public life. If its very aspect does not repel him, sage experience warns him off. "Keep out of politics," says every prudent father to his son, as who should say "avoid the scarlet woman." But, restored to purity and fair competition by the honest system here proposed, public avocation will renew all its native attractions, and the flower of the country will gather about the service of the country. Then, and only then, will the American people successfully assert the same superiority in political skill that is now freely conceded to them in so many other fields.

Thereby we shall have

(*d*) *Trained Men in the Public Employ.*

At the present time the preparation and expertness that we insist on in private business are made but little account of in public. Less special knowledge is put in charge of the canals than is needed to run a canal boat. Some skill is thought to be necessary to shape a jug or a horse-shoe, but not to make laws. Not every one can be trusted to mend a watch, but any body can tinker the constitution. Queer training of statesmanship we have now! The Caucus and the Convention are the academy, the party press and the party platform the text books, and the Fagans of politics the instructors of them who principally control our affairs. So rare is proper qualification for public business that if a fit man is wanted to superintend streets, prisons, almshouses, education, insurance or any other the like common interest, he is not easy to be found. Lawmakers, executives and diplomatists habitually come raw to their work. Inland men administer the navy, and men of peace the army; and new-appointed Secretaries of the Interior, the Treasury, and the Post Office, cram for their duties, like schoolboys for a sudden examination. This lack of prepared skill in public functionaries not only impedes, but robs us. No end of losses to public treasuries result from the fact that contractors and the brokers of politics understand the laws, methods and influences of the public business far better than do the officers of the law themselves.

Nothing is plainer than the need of more instruction and experience in the business of the commonwealth. Not till our affairs are made in large degree a special study and occupation can we hope to see them well conducted. The steady light of skill and science must be substituted for the visions of closest speculation, and the glancing reflections of popular fancy. The most successful governments use little green timber in their constructions. Lustrum after lustrum the same names appear in all their conspicuous councils, growing in influence as they grow in the attributes of instruction and experience. It is the constant custom of the British parliament to hand over the bulk of the difficult and important questions that come before it to commissions of experts for examination, and, in effect, for settlement. In our own case it may be doubted whether the best conducted parts of government are not those few that are still left in charge of old officers of administration, such as lively politicians call fossils.

A comparison of common with statute law furnishes a striking illustration of the advantage of skillfulness over unskillfulness in the regulation of political society. Whether as an adjustment of conflicting private claims, a reconciliation of civil rights and duties, or a rule of judicial procedure, nothing more beneficent than the former has ever been furnished to the world. Even human slavery, the most ancient, wide-spread and powerful, as well as the most wicked of all the establishments of selfish power, has had to confess its virtuous force. It was an edict of Chief Justice Holt that in Great Britain outlawed property in man a century and a half ago; and it was the equally bold and energetic, though less renowned decision of Chief Justice Harrington, of Vermont. proclaiming that nothing but "a Bill of Sale from God Almighty" could give one man the right to own another, that gave slavery in this country its first and ultimately fatal wound.

Now, the common law was wholly the work of expert lawyers, raised to the bench. It has been called, with little exaggeration, "the perfection of reason." But who will call our statute law the perfection of reason? Rather let it be entitled a panorama of ineptitudes. But for the presence in our legislatures of some instructed lawyers, it would be in daily fresh revolt against itself, for the majority of those who sit there are as ignorant of what the law is, as of what it ought to be. Only when our legislative halls shall be filled by experts in political science, as is the high judicial bench by experts of the law, will their business be as well conducted as is now the business of courts.

The growing number, breadth and complexity of political interests demand constantly augmented qualifications in those who undertake to regulate them. "The achievements of the age," says Gladstone, "seem ever to be confronted by new problems that almost defy solution." Enlightened opinion is no longer satisfied that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are secured to them, but demand also some help from government toward social progress. The railroad question alone, in its various bearings, involves more difficulties than all the political issues that vexed Greece, or that raised the Revolution. Only great talents, long devoted to the study of them, can solve such problems.

This system will not fail to bring about

(*e*) *A true Aristocracy, or Government of the Best.*

—I mean not the primitive domination of audacity, cunning or physical prowess; not the reign of a caste, superior in birth, wealth or occupation; not an oligarchy of lawyers, such as De Tocqueville declared our government was fast becoming, nor of politicians, which it actually is; but the freely conceded authority and rule of the most able and upright.

Some principle and form of leadership are instinctive among all gregarious beings. The mass of mankind need guidance quite as much as liberty. Always the welfare of the many has depended on the genius of the few. But for a small number of luminous minds the darkness of the Middle Ages would still enshroud Europe; and, were society from this time onward to be decimated of its ablest and most virtuous members, we should sink back into barbarism far faster than we have escaped from it. It is due in no small degree to her more constant employment of great qualities in the conduct of great affairs that the government of England, of whose illustrious and instructive story I cannot make too frequent mention, has stood so long a fixed and blazing star, amid floating nebulæ, wild-wandering comets and changing moons. In Italy and in Germany this very generation has seen a single commanding nature bestow unity, security, confidence, and independence, on a nation before scattered, bewildered, harassed and enslaved. Our own politics have had no reasoned or distinctive career in any extensive field except when talents beyond the common have laid out their course. It may be doubted whether the Albany Regency was not the best government that the State of New York has ever had. How great a blessing it would be to Chicago, New Orleans or Troy if all its polling places were closed, and all its various economies committed to the sole charge of a Rumford, or even a Goshorn or a Welsh; and how great to this whole country, if some mighty genius could come upon the public stage to jar our present discords into concord by his very momentum, and boldly grapple with the problems of the future!

It is safe to say that nothing valuable to society has ever originated in popular effort or demand. The people may sometimes approve of beneficent reforms, but they never origi[illegible] them. On all but elementary questions, what popular [illegible] needs is not a mouth-piece, but an instructor. The ob[illegible]ns of the weak and the ignorant to the strong and the [illegible]re on the whole far greater than the converse obligations, The labor of the many, to be sure, upholsters the luxurious chambers of the few, but it is the might, enterprise and prudence of the few that give labor its opportunity, and ensure a supply of bread to its thoughtless stomach.

When the most capable members of society shall be put in the steady control of its affairs

(*f*) *System will be Inaugurated in Politics,*

and the philosophy of government will grow to a science. There is plenty of political truth extant now, but it lies scattered, heads to points, friendless, often, and at waste; but by force of this improvement it cannot fail to be gathered, codified and put to use. Not till this happens shall we know how much better is regulation than disorder.

By the operation of this system

(*g*) *True Progress will be Promoted, and False Arrested.*

At present the soundest propositions of reform have to contend on hardly better than equal terms with the most senseless. When a man has devised some correction or improvement in policy or administration his work has only begun. He must wage a long war with possession, cultivate the favor of the masters of politics and parties, gain the ear of legislatures, subdue prejudices, and teach reason to fools. If he appeal directly to the people, he finds their attention absorbed by phantasms and frivolities, or dulness, habit and inertia block the way. But, in the instructed public councils that are believed here prepared, true reform will find a ready and solid foothold, and receive an impetus unknown before. None the less will the mushroom growths of popular enthusiasm, and the false projects of demagogues and self-seekers, which sometimes now reach even the proportions of presidential issues, cease to vex the public calm. Thus shall we be rid of the pest of noisy pseudo-reformers, who, claiming to be the pioneers of progress, no more in fact deserve that appellation than did the bummers that spread out before Sherman's army to be entitled the explorers of its path.

(*h*) *Thus will Progress and Stability be Reconciled and Unified.*

Our present political condition is mixed in about equal proportions of fossilization and senseless change. On the one hand, forms and institutions that once were full of life and beneficence, but now are stony and obstructive, still stand fast-rooted in their unprofitable place,—like ancient forest trees whose sap and verdure have long since departed, and which but hinder now the upspringing of new life,—while, on the other, vague popular discontent and emotional yearning, spurred on by the virtue of rogues and the wisdom of fools, force upon us an unending series of damaging or useless changes. But, under this system, each generation, it is believed, will freely cast off the effete, the nocuous and the irksome, while all the forces of progress, assembled in full strength, will work their work unhindered and in due proportion. Meantime, all the deep living purposes of society will hold their ground, and inheritance, possession, custom and tradition maintain their just influence; for, a reform in methods, this system is conservative of principles. When such conjunction and reconciliation shall be had, and only then, political society will move forward with the assured step of science, and with the steadiness of time, and will display all the symmetric graces of organic development. Then, too, things settled once may hope to be settled for good, and the Monsieur Tonsons of political inquiry will no longer return uselessly to disturb our rest.

A very popular author, Mr. J. S. Mill, whose voluminousness is only equalled by his dullness, has argued, that, in every free, government there will necessarily be a party of reform and a party of conservatism. But no foundation for such a doctrine is to be found in human nature. All men desire both to save what they have that seems to be good, and to press forward to what promises something better; and, for the most part, they follow both purposes with about equal zeal. It is only our false methods of politics that leave us to be tossed between the extremists of the two ideas. Brought into harmonious cooperation by this system, these contradictory elements will beget a single and sovereign result,—as from the combination of bitter alkalies and eating acids come forth the choicest products of the laboratory.

—But the forward movement of society, it must be remembered, will, after all, be necessarily slow. Time, says Lord Coke, is the best innovator. Says Aristotle: "All that belongs to the present hour is vain against old inheritance." Twenty centuries and odd have added little to the wisdom of Solomon. *Natura non facit per saltum.* "The story of man," says Bagehot, "can change only as the slow moving diorama changes; while you look you hardly see it alter." Growth is the most solid of reforms, and slow civilization its own chief apostle and promoter. To sanguine youth it may seem that human society is just blossoming into beauty, but old observation and reflection know better.

This system will restore to the popular mind

(*i.*) *Confidence in Government, Respect for Law, and Content with the Public Service.*

Its continuity of authority, its combined elasticity and fixedness, its broad basis and symmetric, well fastened and weighty superstructure, holding the very foundation to its place, must, to every eye, forbid the approach of shattering crisis and rebellious wrong, and inspire society with a steady faith. That this security of order and prosperity is now greatly lacking is not strange. When the most important questions are settled in Congress, State legislatures and city councils by a party caucus, when the revenues of the state become the spoil of its dignitaries, when taxation makes property an impoverishment, when judges practice self-seeking, when mean men sit in high places, and when lobbies make our laws, what respect can authority inspire, or how can patriotic intelligence feel at ease?

(*j*) *Thus will that Social Calm return*

in which alone the choicest products of brooding time have birth. Society is like a mother liquor, wherein uncounted elements and germs lie mingled. Agitated, it must remain forever muddy, and can bring forth naught else but noisome gases and inert conglomerations; but, suffered to stand in quiet rest, so that its various components may freely assert their native attractions and repulsions, its clear depths will soon be seen packed with bright crystals and growing forms of life. So, when the public mind shall be spared its present political distractions and anxieties, it will freely apply itself to a multitude of profitable aims which it now neglects, and gather store of richest fruits where now are to be seen but barrenness or weeds.

(*k*) *The virtuous influence of this system on Public, will be mirrored in Private Life.*

To have the right man in the right place in politics will help to put him there in all the more personal relations of life. Wise laws will promote all forms of wisdom, and virtuous rulers every virtue. As the successful fraudulence of the party caucus and convention has planted society thick with poisonous spores, so will a system of politics that gives rectitude preferment engraft its own virtuousness on every department of human intercourse. When justice, honor and harmony shall be seen to prevail in the high seats of power, they will receive invigoration in all private business and in every household; while contention, greed, falsehood and intrigue will get a set back: preachers will deal more righteously with their flocks, and grocers with their customers; children will be more docile, women more womanly, and men more brave; all forms of iniquity will be cowed and every right be strengthened. Indeed, the full beneficent consequences of this just arrangement of political society stretch beyond our present conception,—as the colonists of New England's inhospitable shores thought never of the fertile prairies that lay beyond. This system renovates political society from the bottom; and as, when wells are dug, deep mother earth, thrown up to light and air, reveals new seeds, so now will new enlivened democracy surprise the world with virtues hidden hitherto.

(*l*) *The full Benefits of this System not Immediate.*

Neither the corrections nor the creations of this system will be accomplished in a moment. Party spirit, the habitude of self-seeking, and the prestige of the old leaders of politics, will delay for a period the full triumph of honest democracy: and, when these shall have been subdued, time will still be required for the maturing, assembly and consolidation of new powers,—as, after weeds and brambles are torn out, the soil must still have tilth and seeding ere it brings forth the fruits that feed and solace man. A myriad of false tutelary images must be displaced, and new commandments from a new Sinai be printed on the public mind, before we shall know how well democracy can do. So long have the people obeyed the lead of politicians that for a spell they will hardly feel able to go alone. Both in the Popular Conference and in the Electoral College some pupilage will be necessary to expertness in new duties, and some practice for the establishment of new habits. Not in a day will the body of the people learn how to profit by their new autonomy, nor their selected delegates rightly to appreciate and discharge their high responsibilities; nor, till after long working together, will all legitimate influence coalesce in the establishment of public authority in the full shapeliness that human nature and the civilization of the age admit of.

The complete beneficence of this system will be delayed, too, by the fact that not only must the sort of characters that now regulate democratic career be cast out, but new and better men must be found, and brought from obscurity to occupy those posts of public power and responsibility from which, under this dispensation of self-seeking politicians, they are repelled by every instinct of honor and prudence. Time, also, will be required to train them to their new calling. Not till ingenuous talent shall be nourished and practiced in our politics for some period, as false assumption has so long been, will it fully discover to itself, or to the world, its slumbering virtues.

Moreover, when the right man shall have been put in the right place it will not be the mere work of a day to correct existing abuses in the administration of government, and still less to place it in full consonance with the intentions of the age, and fit it to the grooves of progress. Equally will time be necessary to give to politics and public life, in their reformed example, the full matured influence over social, business and domestic relations that naturally belongs to government.

Neither is perfection claimed for the results of this system. Human nature, which knows no perfection, must be taken into account in all political calculations. This I undertake, not to medicine, but only to employ. With development imperfections multiply, like powers. The loveliest woman is not so beautiful as a butterfly, and hardly as toothsome as an oyster. Her husband is less dutiful than her pony, and the baby in her lap inherits more vices than her lap-dog. But I do claim that, year by year, this just, logical and comprehensive plan will work better and better, in infinite progression, and that time can beget no emergency that it will not prove equal to.

It is believed that this method of political construction is adapted to every community that is raised above barbarism. The substance of human nature is the same everywhere. The prevailing notion that the several divisions of the Caucasian race are fitted for different forms of government—as the Russian for despotism, the British for oligarchy, and our own for democracy—is preposterous. Equally absurd is the common saying that the French is unfitted for any. If it is, all nations are. When a suit of garments does not suit the fault is rightly laid to the workman's want of skill, and not the build of the customer. So of forms of government. This system would justify itself in every country of Europe, as well in Turkey as in Sweden, in Belgium and in the dominions of the Czar, where practice has already been had in existing so-called modes of popular government, and where it has not. On the disorders and diseases of the Southern republics of this hemisphere it would work like a charm; nor, till they employ it, can any of them escape the anxieties, discords and convulsions with which they are now afflicted.

Not till it is adopted by a neighborhood of nations will its most sovereign virtues be revealed. Then wars will cease, and Europe will look back upon her present career as she does now upon the senseless and bloody strife of the Dark Ages: and then mankind, long shocked by the spectacle of the injuries that governments so often inflict, will wonder at its new beneficence.

The Administration of Government.

The propositions of this system relate only to the method of *constituting* political society. A reform in that involves all other reforms. Therefore, to turn from the consideration of their rationale and general influence to the argument of particular matters of administration, is as though Stevenson had quit the study of the construction of the locomotive to teach its engineer his duties, or to help each belated traveller home on a wheelbarrow. It would also be to engage in an endless task; for there is hardly a topic of public policy but what is still in dispute, or a particular of administration that does not need to be corrected. Nevertheless, it may be worth while to touch upon a single problem of practical government, that, in one form or another, constantly demands solution; with a view the more clearly to indicate the unsatisfactoriness of our present state, and the urgent need of greater capabilities at headquarters than what now administer the commonwealth.

The Paternal Principle.

Ought government to be a means of security only, or of progress also? and, if the latter, where shall the line be drawn that separates its functions from the functions of the individual? Both in theory and practice this chief water-shed of political administration is now entirely undefined. Those who think with Carlyle, Spencer and Buckle would have government refrain from every attempt to aid social advancement, while another as numerous a school desire it to be almost communistic. So, in some cities water-works, gas-works and street railroads are a public enterprise, and, in others, a private. Pennsylvania has lately transferred her canals to private ownership; but the latest constitution of New York forbids that ours should ever be sold. On the one hand it is proposed that insurance and banks of saving should be a government matter, and, on the other, that law should not even supervise them. Some of us want to make education compulsory, to prescribe for labor its hours, and for money its rent; while others would leave all such matters to individual impulse and competition.

Three things have begot in many minds a strong prejudice against interference by the state with personal autonomy any farther than bare justice and security require. First, the idea, handed down from despotic times, that there is a natural antagonism between the people and their rulers; second, the injurious perversions of the paternal principle that the best governments have so often exhibited; and, third, the frightful claims of communism, which has shown as much audacity, and bred as much trouble and apprehension in this generation as in any within historic times. Nevertheless, the long-practiced and successful provision by government of roads, bridges, post offices, light-houses, street lights, and other necessaries of civilized society, compels the most timid, prudent and self-reliant to confess that the fatherly hand of political power, though often oppressive and cruel, is also often beneficent.

The only real question is, to determine what matters it shall touch, and from what abstain. To settle this in principle does not seem difficult, though to say to which side particular cases would belong might sometimes require careful scrutiny,—as the surveyor's compass can quickly indicate the direction of a boundary, though the slow chain and many metes and bounds may still be needed to tell each bordering proprietor which trees along the line are his. One of Jefferson's giant apothegms covers the whole case. "Governments should do nothing for the citizen that the citizen can do for himself." In other words, the paternal function in politics is properly co-extensive with the list of wants that are common to the members of a community, but which the individual by himself is unable satisfactorily to supply. For example, the resident of a city needs for various purposes an abundant provision of water; but to secure it himself, by well, aqueduct or cistern, is out of the question. This, therefore, is a want that the municipality should attend to, in part at least, at the common cost. That there may be a few who do not need or desire the water makes no odds: the neighborhood is lord over the neighbor.

This subject is of peculiar interest in the important case of municipalities. What with the finer division of labor and consequent concentration of industries, the strengthening of social appetites that accompanies civilization, the multiplication of conveniences and pleasures that can be enjoyed only where population is concentrated, and the constant fresh facilities for movement and intercommunication, the day seems not to be far distant when a majority of the people will be gathered in cities or other large compact neighborhoods. Now, the people in St. Louis, or San Francisco, have few concerns in common with the people in Portland or New York, but they have a good many in common with each other. In the former case national protection, free and peaceful intercourse, and the post-office, are about all; while, in the latter, are streets, drainage, a harbor, water supply, schools, police, and ever so many more. Accordingly, a widely extended government, like the federal Union, seldom has just occasion to exercise paternal functions; but a community of narrow geography often has.

With the progress of civilization the number of this class of interests constantly increases. Till the wagon-wheel was invented, the narrow mountain path and the rough plain answered all the purposes of roads; and, till medical science had accumulated, quarantines and boards of health were of little use. Accordingly, we constantly see proprietorship more and more giving place to common rights,—as when a toll-gate is taken down, or the ferry-boat of pioneer enterprise is supplanted by a public bridge, or when Trinity House at the cost of half a million purchases the private light at Skerry Head, which for so many generations had guided and taxed the commerce of Liverpool.

Although, whether in this country or elsewhere, public authority has most often meddled with this sort of business only to muddle it, and, abstaining where it should interfere, has interfered where it should abstain, thoughtful and observing minds will still agree that it is alike the duty and the destiny of political society to undertake a wider range of paternal functions than is now exercised by it in this country. All about innumerable signs to this effect are to be seen; as when so many cities are furnishing their own gas, with great economy; when Belgium, Bavaria and France show themselves able to manage railroads, to the advantage, as against private control, of all parties concerned; when the Canton of Switzerland insures its property-owners against loss by fire at the lowest rate ever heard of, and supplies school books to its children at less than one-fourth part of what ours pay for them; when the government of Great Britain beneficially absorbs the savings bank and the telegraph, and even builds up in its Indian possessions the foreign industries of tea, cinchona and india-rubber; and when, among ourselves, the signal service, the life-saving service, pisciculture and other public undertakings that are strictly paternal, have lately proved of such high service to the general welfare. Only in such a way can the injurious irruptions, lodgments, deficits and obstructive shallows of the wide watery element be hindered or remedied. Says Mr. E. J. Cahill of St. Louis, who is reputed to possess uncommon knowledge of the subject: "Fifty million of dollars once judiciously and honestly spent in leveeing the Mississippi and its lower tributaries would increase the productiveness of that valley by half a billion annually." This work, by the by, is worse conducted now, from all accounts, than it has been before since its inauguration in 1717. The undrained and sickly marshes of Montezuma, the swamps of the Kankakee, the bogs of the Sacramento, and a thousand other similar scenes of native fertility at waste, can be redeemed from desolation and malaria to human use only by the employment of the paternal principle in government. In no other way, on any wide scale, can irrigation be employed, whose fertilizing potency, in India, Egypt, Lombardy and Peru, has shown itself a source of wealth compared with which the obscene heaps of the Chinchas and all the buried coprolites of Carolina are but as the dry spoor of some lone wandering bison to the juicy richness of the populous farmyard. What else but the protecting care of government can save or restore to the wide slopes and thick-scattered spurs of the long range of the Alleghanies the woody breeders of surrounding fertility that once garnished the landscape, and fend off the fast approaching barrenness and desolation of Judea, Greece and Sicily? Or, in our own State, what else can keep the region of the Adirondacks a happy hunting ground for nature's tastes, and spongy reservoir of useful rains, instead of the horrid hatchel of geologic spikes which it threatens to become? In the nature of things there is just the same reason why government should manage the telegraph as the post-office, and why railroads should belong to the public domain as why common highways and rivers should. It is the natural right of every man, not only to pass to and fro upon the earth, but also to have the free and equal enjoyment of all the facilities for that purpose that belong to the generation but cannot be supplied by the individual. Not that the ownership and operation of railroads can be profitably undertaken by government in this country now, but that under a better constitution of democracy it will be. Under our present laws this institution is half a private possession and half a public easement, and, until it is wholly the one or the other, it must own to the weakness and discord of a house divided against itself. Through legislative sins of commission, permission or omission in the regulation of this great interest an uncountable sum of money has passed from the possession of those who earned it into that of adventurers, gamblers, the demagogues of the stump, the vultures of the bar and the bank, and the conspirators of Wall street. I know not when such panel-house was ever prepared for the unwary as when, at the instigation of false projectors, the law encouraged the silly voter to mortgage his house, his farm, his industry, and his provision for a comfortable old age to speculative enterprises that were wholly beyond his understanding;—thus lustful countrymen are lured into the chambers of sin, robbed of their cash, and turned helpless out of doors. It is by the fault of lawmakers, too, that the waters of the Rocky Mountains and the Sierras, which ought forever to remain the equal heritage of all the people, are fast becoming a monopoly of private corporations, to be fed out inch by inch for a royalty to the dwellers on the thirsty plains below.

—In many cases, on the other hand, our governments are now quite too ready with the exercise of the paternal function. The instance of education is the only one I shall mention in illustration of this truth.

At a centenary celebration of some public school in Boston last summer the opinion was expressed by three of its distinguished pupils, Messrs. Wm. M. Evarts, Wendell Phillips and Rev. Dr. Peabody, that the institutions of learning in this country, and especially the common school, are deteriorating. This, I believe, is the prevailing judgment among intelligent, observing and educated men, and I strongly join in it: and I lay the disastrous change to too much interference with the matter by the State, instigated thereto, and guided therein, by a set of educational, but not educated quacks, whom our false system of politics has lifted into influence and power.

Down to about the time of Horace Mann, some five and thirty years ago, the legislatures of New England meddled little with the common school, except to make its establishment and support compulsory in every neighborhood, leaving its management in all particulars to the parents and taxpayers of each district. Even the method of levying the necessary tax was determined by a vote of the people assembled in school meeting. This was usually done by assessing it "one half on the Grand List and one half on the polls of the scholars,"—than which distribution between property and persons of the expense attending the conduct of social interests none better was ever planned by the most selected senate. The same authority, acting through a committee from among themselves, regulated the school-house and the hours of school, examined and hired the schoolmaster, and determined, when necessary, what school books should be employed. So our academies and colleges, down to about the same period, though favored, empowered and guarded by the law, were neither its creation nor its creature, but were in all cases the issue and concern of individual enterprise, professional zeal, piety or public spirit. Each of them was the pride of its neighborhood, and spread around, it is not too much to say, all the best influences of learning. In short, the whole matter of education was then left, where it still ought to be, to the anxious judgment of parents, the competition of teachers, the zeal of local interest and religious persuasion, and to individual generosity. Was ever the business anywhere better done?

But now all this is changed. In the case of common schools State superintendents, county commissioners and city boards have supplanted the district committee, and brought the wishes and opinions of parents to nought. Normal schools, the most profitless of all our foreign importations, fatten at the public crib, while the honest old academy, robbed of its patronage, stands starving by. So, the colleges and universities that are started and supported by State and city governments, not only have brought no help to the cause of higher education, but, inheriting the vices of their parentage, have inflicted upon it even a stain and a damage. Our worthless agricultural colleges are examples of how the interests of education fare when politicians take them in charge. Their professors, fathered by a lobby, soon grew to be a lobby themselves, and gathered in force at Washington, in 1873, to persuade Congress to make an addition to their unearned salaries. In the President's message to Congress that same year, and again in 1877, it was recommended that a national bureau be established at the capital to instruct, if not to oversee us all, in the education of our children! No farther, surely, could folly go in the application of the paternal principle in government.

CHAPTER X.

CAN THIS SYSTEM BE BROUGHT INTO USE?

A FINAL topic, and the most important of all, remains: Can so great an innovation in democratic methods as is here proposed be ever got adopted? Here is indeed the very touchstone of the merit of this book; and, unless it can stand the criterion, the best use of its pages will but be to line a box. This, also, was about the only question that was raised concerning the scheme by any of the large number of readers whose attention it attracted, as published in a brief form some half a dozen years ago. "The plan is sound," they nigh unanimously said, "and, if employed, could not fail to work a blessed revolution in our politics: but the difficulty is that it can never be introduced into use. It is practical, but not practicable."

Several reasons were given for this despairing view—to the sufficiency of no one, nor of all of which I subscribe; firmly believing, as I do, that, if the plan be consonant with nature's laws, a better destiny awaits it than to remain, like the devices of so many others, a mere paleontological specimen in the vast museum of theoretic politics.

Some of my critics seem to think that the case is hopeless because of the undoubted fact that no large community has ever yet had a thoroughly well conducted government for any long period of time. But this is no sufficient reason for despair. Good government cannot be had till the method of its construction has first been devised. If this is accomplished here, we stand on new and enormous vantage-ground, and need not be disheartened by all the failures of the past.

Others are appalled by the seeming magnitude of the change that is proposed. It claims to be, indeed, no trifling thing in what it undertakes to do. It proposes no mere treatment of casualties, or temporizing resort, like current amendments in laws and constitutions; no surface anointment of deep sores, like Civil Service Reform; no "change of place without a change of pain," like a party revolution; nor soothing syrup for troubled patriotism, like statistical displays of the nation's growth in numbers, wealth and virtue:—it undertakes to build anew the sick man's health by removing him to another sky, where the miasms that have sapped his strength and made his complexion hideous can never come. But, after all, my whole proposal is little more than to discard our present figment of democracy, and to print in the statute book what is already the virtual law of our political life. The change is great only because it is vital.

Many fear that party politicians will be able to prevent the introduction of a system that promises to take away their business. This apprehension is not strange: for so long has democracy served in their houses, that, like the ancient hero twirling a distaff among the women, we understand neither our own strength nor the essential feebleness of our oppressors. But the hostility of politicians, however earnest it may be, can prove no serious obstacle to the adoption of a sounder system of government. Their number is comparatively small, their talents not very eminent, and their credit bad. We follow their lead because leaders are absolutely necessary, as already fully demonstrated, in all the wider spheres of democratic politics, and because our present system of elections provides no way for our selecting them ourselves. Their authority and false prestige always break down when the popular will is aroused and pointed toward a definite object. Thus, in 1861, the rank and file of the Whig party at the South, and of the Democratic party at the North, deserted their old leaders, or forced them into a new course. In Pennsylvania, in 1873, as in Illinois a year or two before, the discontentedness of the people with the conduct of affairs compelled the calling of a constitutional convention, and, despite the opposition of the bulk of the politicians of both parties, adopted its recommendations. Such instances might be multiplied. Indeed it may be doubted whether the known opposition of this class of men would not aid the introduction of this scheme; for there is no occupation worse thought of than theirs. We obey them, not out of love, but from dependence, and shall gladly shake them off our backs whenever the opportunity shall be presented.

Moreover, any promising endeavor toward the reform of our politics will have the cordial support of no small share of politicians themselves. Their ranks still contain many high-minded men who loathe their present base surroundings, and will rejoice to see an honest path opened to their ambition. There is indeed, no doubt, more virtue among public men than recent exhibitions and revelations would seem to show, and than we are apt to give them credit for. Even in the proceedings of the common council of New York, Chicago, Washington, Charleston, or any other city, may be discerned an undercurrent of desire to do what is right toward the people, and between man and man. Many of our politicians are more sinned against than sinning. They are the victims of a false system, that is as much a part of our political institutions as the federal compact itself. Led into politics by worthy motives, they did not foresee through what mire they must tread, nor how impossible it would be to keep themselves clean amidst it. It is now the most difficult thing in the world for a public man to be virtuous. I lay down the broad proposition, that no man can follow politics, with a success any way proportioned to his ability, without doing things at which an enlightened conscience revolts.

Neither will party spirit be stirred against this reform, as some suppose ; for it makes no war upon either party.

Nor will the enthusiasts of particular policies, such as free trade, or liquor prohibition ; for surely it gives them the fairest chance that they ever had, or can have.

The power of office will not much oppose it ; for office-holding is now too brief to concern itself about so remote a danger.

Neither will the press ; for, often as that now lends itself to other influences, it is too sensible not to be aware that truth is its surest strength, the general welfare its best purveyor, and public opinion its richest customer.

In short, I know not from what quarter much opposition to the introduction of this system needs to be feared.

But, whoever will not oppose, who will approve and favor it? Will the press, chief minister and organ of public thought? Will the higher intelligence of the country? And, above all, will general opinion?

The answer to this supremely important inquiry is no longer to me a matter of conjecture. The skeleton of this system, and of this discussion of it, has been already published, and somewhat extensively circulated. It was the issue of an unknown pen and an unknown press,—an estray, as it were, in the herd of reputable literature. Nevertheless it awakened great interest. It was reprinted almost entire in the Philadelphia Legal Intelligencer, the oldest and perhaps the most esteemed of the law magazines of the country, and in several periodicals of less conspicuousness. Among the newspapers that came under my own observation, it received a column or more of comment, almost always highly favorable, from the Evening Post and World of New York, the Press of Philadelphia, the Tribune and Times of Chicago, the Cincinnati Times, and a good many others less widely known. It drew from no small number of distinguished men private letters of appreciation and approval. Above all, submitted to several hundreds of my neighbors and acquaintances at large—farmers, mechanics, merchants, laborers and professional men—it found the endorsement of general opinion. With nigh unanimous accord they said: "This is the very thing we need."

But the last point deserves a moment's more particular consideration; for the reception that the scheme will receive from the body of the community must be after all the pivot of its success. The people are sometimes charged with indifference to the wrongs they suffer: and, indeed, they often seem, like patient oxen, to chew the cud of dull content even while they feel the lash. When some exhibition of gross incompetence, some outburst of long-festering corruption, or some aggression of official power on democratic right, in law, judgment or execution, stirs us for a moment, we soon appear to drowse again, soothed with lotus of republicanism, and thanking God that, after all, we are not as other men. But this is only seeming. An anxious and inquiring discontent in fact pervades the whole public mind. Some radical change is almost universally felt to be necessary.

From every side comes up the cry—as yet in vain—"What shall we do to be saved?" Hence the frequent reformed charters of cities, and the constant succession of constitutional conventions,—each new one most often turning out to be more incompetent and unprofitable than the last. With rare exceptions, men of average intelligence are no longer enamored of either party, and are heartily sick of the politicians who manage them. They cannot fail to see that the welfare of the country is just about as safe, and as much perilled, with one party as the other; and that, while the mass of each party is as honest and patriotic as human nature admits of, there is in each a bunch of demagogues with whom principle and patriotism are but catchwords, and who follow politics for gain, but who, nevertheless, under the present system, are the masters of public affairs. The nation is ripe for better things, if better things can be devised. Nothing hinders reform but the lack of a solid method of reform. Preparations and facilities unknown before and elsewhere are now at hand to the American people for the redemption of democracy from its unworthy state. Our mixed stock, already proved on so many fields to be more than the equal of any other in modern times; the wide diffusion of the tools and elements of knowledge by common schools, and of the spirit of inquiry and independent thought by a free press; the general possession by the people in lands and houses of a solid and steady interest in the public welfare,—these advantages, added to our long experience and constant study of democratic politics, supremely qualify us for doing the best that human society is capable of doing.

There is every reason to expect that the average American community will welcome this attempt at a correction of our political condition as soon as it is made known to them. Its principles are no way beyond their comprehension, and its chief methods are already familiar to them in the party caucus and convention. Everybody must see that the people do act, and can act, whether in the selection of high public officers or in the direction of high affairs, only through Representative Delegates, such as this system employs. The only question is, whether these necessary officers of democracy shall continue to be the appointment of self-seeking politicians and narrow party idolatry, or shall, by this system, be the fair choice of the body of the public will. This dilemma is surely comprehensible to the great majority of voters, nor can they long hesitate which horn of it to choose.

Popular ballot, though endeared to us by many proud associations, is to-day but a fascinating fraud. In the arms of this Delilah the Samson of democracy has laid his head, while the Philistines of politics have shorn him of his locks of beauty and strength. They have put out his eyes. They set him daily to grind in their mills. Let them beware, and let democracy itself beware, lest sometime, if early warning be not taken, when, as now, they lead him forth to make them sport, his native vigor shall return to him, his mighty hands shall seek the pillars of their sacrilegious temples, and politicians and people be buried in a common ruin.

The most that threatens the ready reception of this system is the incapacity of the general mind to imagine how much more wisely things might be ordered than they now are. So constantly has political society failed to bring to its employ the highest intelligence and virtue of the age, and so full has its career heretofore been of corruption, folly and consequent catastrophe, that we have few facts to aid our fancy, and can with difficulty help looking upon such evils as a part of the order of nature. Imperfect as is our present system, it is perhaps about as good as any with which history acquaints us. So unsuccessful in the promotion of the common welfare have governments generally been that intelligent opinion still doubts whether that one is not best which governs least. The reforms that we ourselves have tried have quite as often as otherwise proved changes for the worse, and when political power has undertaken to be paternal and beneficent it has too often turned out to be tyrannical and obstructive. So many new charters, constitutions and administrations have failed to help us that we have got so that we don't believe in any. Besides, native sloth, stupidity, and philosophic Epicureanism say: "We have got along pretty well in this way a good while; despite the taxgatherer we have enough to eat and drink; at fair and at foul each has an equal chance; we go our own gait, and there is no man to make us afraid: what better can be expected of human nature, or what better desired?"—so do the dwellers in some squalid hut, comfortless, disordered, unsafe, vermin-haunted and full of quarrel, oft stay content, unknowing, and incapable to conceive, how sweet a home it is where peace, comfort, purity and safety reign, and where the disorders that attend bad management can never enter.

But even this ground of apprehension for the fate of this scheme may safely be dismissed in this age of social zeal and intellectual stir. A generation and a people that in their eagerness for reform and progress spare nothing of the handiwork of man, and scarcely the institutions of nature itself, and that seem to be especially curious about questions of government, will not fail to study and employ any truths that may be here presented.

But, whatsoever and whosoever holds back, necessity drives. Not long can we go on in this way. Already Judge Lynch hangs more than Jack Ketch. Already are the bulk of the railroad interests of the country so tangled and betrayed by the incompetence and corruptness of legislators that neither investors nor travellers know their rights, and the courts themselves are dumbfounded. Already scores of municipalities, like Providence, Poughkeepsie, Port Jervis, Rahway and Cohoes, have been forced by exhausting taxes to abandon for a time important functions, such as police, education and the repair of streets,—escaping the levies of politicians by a return toward anarchy and barbarism. As things are going, the day threatens to be near when half the cities in the land will first be bankrupt, and then delivered over to the sordidness and disorder of Canton and Stamboul. Not the legislation of Washington, Albany or Springfield can save them from this destiny; but only a true empowerment of general intelligence and purposes, which now they wholly lack.

What more terrible evils are in store for us it would be venturesome to predict. The calamities of nations have seldom been foreseen. One source of enormous peril, however, may be mentioned as patent to every eye. I mean disputed elections. Already important communities have been held back from civil war on this account only by the federal arm.

But when this authority itself shall be questioned, as is threatened at every presidential election, there will be no higher power to keep the peace. Nothing can secure us from this supreme calamity but the system of elections that is here set forth, and which, excluding fraud, and rendering uncertainty impossible, leaves no room for such contention.

These urgent dangers have already prepared the people to seize resolutely upon any means of escape from them. Especially are property owners, who, fortunately, compose the bulk of the nation both in power and in numbers, alarmed at the growth of taxation, and eager to strike a blow at the pauper politicians that cause it.

Thus I base my confidence that this system can be put into use in this country (1) on the generally admitted necessity of something being done, (2) on the competency of the people to appreciate the remedy that I propose, and (3) on their ability to avail themselves of it whether politicians will or no.

I do not look to see it tried first on any large scale, such as in the government of the Union, or of the State of New York, —although the wider the sphere of its operation the more marked will its logical benefits be. It must creep at first, like all the worthiest children of time. Some small State like Connecticut or New Jersey, or, more likely, some of the many municipalities which now fathom the lowest depths of misrule, will probably be the pioneer in this reform. Fortunately, not only can any single State try it by an alteration of its constitution, but by legislation alone it can authorize a city to try it,—at least in New York, and in most of the other States.

So far so good. But, granted that the virtuousness and necessity of this system will be appreciated, that the times are opportune, and that nothing serious stands in the way, in what manner and by what means, can it be set in actual operation? The answer is easy. This must be done just as all other political and social reforms, such as the repeal of the corn-laws in Old England, and the outlawry of the liquor traffic in New, have been; that is, by *the personal endeavors of its friends*. The speculations of the brain are vain without the helping hand.

If this system of political construction should be accepted as sound by the intelligence of the generation no fear needs to be entertained but what active efforts will be made to compel its introduction into use. The initiatory movements in this behalf, and the conduct of the whole campaign, like everything else of worth that was ever wrought for society, will be the special business of the few whom nature has appointed to great employment.

The kind of work that will have to be done to promote the introduction of this new device is familiar to all men practiced in democratic politics. Public interest must be awakened, and public opinion instructed on the subject through the press, by newspaper, pamphlet and handbill. Then public meetings must be called, to collect its friends and show them how numerous they are; to stimulate effort by sympathy and discussion; to awaken the courage of fellowship, the spirit of party, and the proselyting ambition of human nature. Then organization must be had; for, though the whole world of thought should applaud, and every fireside become its school, no human cause can ever triumph without that vital aid. Finally, all these influences and powers must be brought to bear upon the selection and support at the polls of a proper representative in the State legislature, or at whatever other seat of authority the law may make it necessary to appeal. By the custom of the legislature of New York such a modification of the charter of any of the numerous minor cities of that commonwealth as would be necessary to introduce this system would be granted, as a matter of course, at the mere request of its representatives; or, at most, with the single condition of a subsequent approving vote by the people.

In this undertaking there may be delays and interruptions from adverse influences; but, the cause once become the object of popular interest and endeavor, the opposition of parties, politicians, or anything else, though momentarily successful, will but throw it back for a better collection of its strength. All along it will have, over partisan, personal and sentimental questions, the advantage that it is catholic, democratic and solid, and that it is stirred without other possible purpose than the common welfare of political society.

Put in practice in any one community, this system will be its own sufficient apostle, and will quickly spread from city to city, from State to State, and to the Federal centre itself.

Its progress will be aided by this, that in any municipal government, for example, where it may be employed, the body of Electors, as enjoying the confidence and fairly representing the ideas of the majority of the community, may properly suggest to their constituents, as they doubtless will, candidates for the State legislature, the federal congress, the custom-house or the post-office, even before the system has been incorporated into either the State or the federal constitution. These nominations can hardly fail to get more support from the people, and more favor from any high appointing authority, than those which politicians may make in party convention or by private letter. Thus missionaries of the new Gospel will be sent forth from its cradle among the heathen, till at last all the kingdoms of the earth shall be gathered under its banners of harmony.

But nothing can be accomplished here, any more than anywhere else, without sacrifice. Who are they that will incur the labor, trouble, and expense that the experiment of this system will necessarily involve? No difficulty need be apprehended here. I look to see a syndicate of intelligent patriotism formed, sometime and somewhere, to put the matter on the market of public opinion. The country is full of men eager to toil and spend in some good cause. If not the most abundant, public spirit is certainly the most wasted of commodities. One hundredth part of what is annually given to found observatories and universities that are not wanted, to help imbue Yale, Harvard and Princeton with the rot of luxury and pride, to support and propagate a religion that Heaven itself is taking the best possible care of, to secure to unthrift, idleness and impotence the comfortable things that, by nature's wise intention, should be enjoyed only by prudence, industry and vigor, and in other the like misguided generosities, would abundantly secure this system a trial, and build for the investors a monument to outlast the pyramids. There is public spirit enough in New York City to make it the navel of modern civilization, if only a right constitution of politics would give it opportunity. No honest and sensible undertaking for the betterment of affairs anywhere lacks active and self-sacrificing supporters.

Surely, since the civil war, no man need fear that patriotism is dead in this country, either among the common people, the wealthy or the cultivated. Every issue of the daily newspaper, in letters from the people, reports of public meetings for the correction of abuses, and the like, demonstrates a wide-spread zeal for the public welfare, so flaming that oft-repeated failures cannot smother it. Surely a method of reform that seems to reach the bottom of our difficulties will not fail to gather to its support a crowd of volunteers.

Even as a business enterprise the undertaking to introduce this system will pay. In every one of our cities there are men who, for the mere saving of taxes, could well afford the cost of making known the plan to every voter, organizing its converts, and securing its introduction.

Not only will patriotism, benevolence and self-interest come to its aid, but great ambition also, which now is pretty much shut out from public life by the thick abatis of fraud, intrigue and indirection which Political Organization has set to guard its approaches.

From every quarter, indeed, help may safely be looked for in the furtherance of this system. Old age will make a contribution, so as to leave behind it an improved political inheritance ; middle life, to secure its now anxious estate ; and youth to prepare for itself a fairer career. Capital, labor, and enterprise, all now robbed, misguided or impeded, the wisdom of the few now balked, and the desires of the many so often fruitless in their just aims, will all gather to its aid.

THE END.